

SIR HENRY HARDINGE AND THE CRISIS IN THE PUNJAB, 1844-8

# ABSTRACT

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Anthony Kellett,  
M. A. Thesis,  
Department of History,  
McGill University.

The object of this thesis is to study the part played by Hardinge in the subjugation and eventual annexation by the British of the Punjab. Throughout the 1840s the Indian government was preoccupied with the north-west frontier, and after the withdrawal from Afghanistan an Anglo-Sikh clash seemed imminent. Although Hardinge thought that the anarchic state of the Punjab might result in a conflict he strove to avert such an eventuality while at the same time preparing for any contingency. When, in 1845, war did break out and the Sikhs were defeated, Hardinge resisted strong pressure by the annexationists in order to guide the Punjab, via a period of Company sponsorship, back to its former role as a buffer state. The failure of this experiment led ultimately to the annexation of the Punjab one year after Hardinge left India.

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Anthony Kellett

## PREFACE

In 1844, after a long and distinguished career of public service, Sir Henry Hardinge was appointed to the position of governor-general of India. His administration came at a time of markedly changing attitudes towards India, which themselves reflected the heightened interest of Britons in the country.

Although at that time the empire expanded little and the trend in British policy was towards responsible government for, and "informal" ties with, the colonies, no one - not even the radicals - advocated the abandonment of India. Whether for reasons of trade, or of the dissemination of western enlightenment, or of frontier security, the 'thirties and 'forties in India saw a trend towards trusteeship and a forward policy and away from the paternalist policies of the East India Company. Hardinge's rule epitomized the debate that recurred throughout the nineteenth century as to whether or not it was necessary to expand the frontiers of British India. The dilemma he faced was well put by H. A. L. Fisher when he wrote that "an orderly power ringed round by turbulence always finds itself compelled to establish peace and security upon its frontiers."



The most important feature of Hardinge's administration, in itself and in the context of the debate over the security of the north-west frontier, was the crisis that was developing in the relationship between British India and the buffer state of the Punjab. A war on the Sutlej had for some years appeared imminent and it finally erupted in 1845. Although the Sikhs were defeated the question of whether or not the Company should acquire a more defensible frontier was in a sense held in abeyance by Hardinge's attempt to return as far as possible to the status quo. His policy in this regard is the more interesting for his successor's having adopted an entirely opposite one.

This study is, therefore, an attempt to analyse the British attitudes towards the Punjab and, in the light of them, Hardinge's own policies, and to determine the part played by the first Sikh war in the development of the different viewpoints. It also seeks to establish whether or not the Indian army was ready for war in 1845 since military preparedness is often an important reflection of foreign policy. This aspect of the study is important because it has sometimes been implied that Hardinge was essentially a military governor whose primary function was the resolution of a pressing frontier problem.

The form adopted in this thesis, particularly with regard to abbreviations, capitalization, and footnotes, is based on that used in the second series of the "Studies in

Irish History," recent works embodying modern editorial practices. For aesthetic reasons the titles of books have not been underlined in the text as they are in the footnotes. As regards place names, rather than use the modern nationalist spellings (for example the Punjab is often referred to now as the Panjab), I have adopted those that were used in "The Imperial Gazetteer of India" (1907-08) which should be as recognizable today as they would have been in 1845.

I have tried to adhere as closely as possible to the original form of Hardinge's correspondence, but sometimes his use of abbreviation and his grammar, which frequently succumbed to the need for haste, has made it necessary to transcribe his short-hand in full and to add punctuation marks.

The letters "H. P." in the footnotes indicate that the reference was drawn from the Hardinge papers. Where these letters are followed by Roman numerals the extract referred to can be found in the box of microfilm bearing the corresponding number. In the footnotes I have abbreviated the "Dictionary of National Biography" (D. N. B.) and the "Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research (J. S. A. H. R.).

I would like to express my appreciation for the advice and encouragement given me by my tutor, Professor Hereward Senior of McGill University, and to thank Mrs Lewis

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Anthony Kellett

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(Places mentioned in the text are underlined)

## I. THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT AND THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER

When soldiers are placed in a position of high civil authority, they are often thought of as being military governors whose sole object is to meet a menacing situation with force or the threat of it, and they are assumed to have all the attributes and failings of their caste. Even his son implied that Sir Henry Hardinge was sent to India as a soldier intended to deal with a frontier problem,<sup>1</sup> and his administration is largely remembered for the war fought against the Sikhs, rather than for the civil reforms for which he was responsible. However, no governor-general at this time, soldier or otherwise, could afford to neglect the army or to ignore the problems confronting the British on the frontier, and it is doubtful whether a civilian head of government would have had any more time to devote to the general administration of the country than had Hardinge. The East India Company ruled India by the sword and the governors-general devoted the greater part of their time and resources to enhancing the security of British rule in the country, because the lack of social or administrative reforms could not be more immediately dangerous than an indifference towards military needs.

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge, Viscount Charles, Hardinge, Oxford 1891, p. 48.

This suspicion directed against soldiers at the head of civil affairs explains why Hardinge was blamed for being inadequately prepared for the first Sikh war and at the same time was accused of provoking the Sikh invasion of territory under British protection by his over-extensive preparations. Just as soldiers are often harshly judged in a civilian context, so their military actions are subjected to more severe criticism than are those of civilian administrators.

Even in time of peace, a large portion of the work of the Indian government had to do with the army, on which was spent more than half of the revenue. Hardinge himself remarked on the military nature of the government of India when in 1844, whilst still at sea, he wrote to his stepson that "all authorities concur in this military doctrine - that India having been gained by the sword, must for several years to come be preserved by the sword."<sup>1</sup> Almost as soon as he arrived in India, Hardinge turned his attention to strengthening the army. Unfortunately he found himself in an anomalous position since his military powers and responsibilities as governor-general were not very precise, being as much a matter of individual interpretation as of constitutional definition. The consequences of the lack of clarity in the division of responsibilities between the governor-general and the commander-in-chief assumed considerable importance as a result of the first Sikh war, which evoked widespread criticism of the army's preparedness and of the leadership displayed during the campaign.

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Sir Walter James, at sea, 1844. H. P.

The office that Hardinge went to India to fill had been created in the Regulating act of 1774. Originally the governor-general was severely circumscribed by the powers given his council, but by 1786 an India act and its corollaries had given him the authority to override the council. Many anomalies remained, however, to limit the governor-general's executive power, and it was not until 1833 that the independent power of legislation and administration enjoyed by Madras and Bombay was withdrawn and the governor-general in council was made the supreme authority for the whole of India.

The increase in the governor-general's power was paralleled by a decline in the independent authority of the court of directors of the East India Company. The India act of 1784 created a board of control whose president was a member of the cabinet. Initially the erosion of the directors' powers was slow, particularly when the wars with France absorbed much of the English government's attention; their authority declined in proportion to the fall in the representation of the East India interests in parliament, which had reached its apogee in 1806. Parliament itself showed little interest in India until the late eighteen-thirties, when the Company became involved in the affairs of Afghanistan. But more and more the board of control - and through it the ministry - was able to have its own way on most matters of importance, and by 1833 the government effectively exercised the direction of Indian affairs, although the directors were still formally responsible for the orders sent to India. However, while important political

questions were increasingly dealt with by the British government, the directors still handled much of the ordinary work that devolved on the home authorities, and their constant attention to the Company's financial interests facilitated the governor-general's task.

The governor-general retained a large measure of independence, being given general instructions but also a great deal of latitude in their interpretation, due largely to the slowness of communications between England and India. This is strongly illustrated by the spectacular expansion of the Company's territories in the first half of the nineteenth century at a time when the home authorities consistently advocated a pacific policy. In addition, the presidents of the board from the time of Dundas on the whole lacked stature; Hardinge, for instance, found that the ailing Lord Ripon intervened very little in Indian affairs. However, no governor-general could be completely independent of the home authorities (as Ellenborough found to his cost), and, in order to be successful, all needed the strong support of at least one party in England.

In Hardinge's time, the work of the Indian government was transacted in four departments - home, foreign, military and finance - each of which was in the charge of a secretary. The control and management of all departments was vested in the governor-general and the council in their collective capacity; no member of the council was the active head of any department. This put a heavy burden on the governor-general, aptly described by Dalhousie: "A Governor-General is unlike



any other Minister under heaven - he is the beginning, middle and end of all. Everything is his business . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Hardinge had a rather pedestrian council who were content to leave him with much of the responsibility for the foreign and military departments. "I have excellent co-adjutors," Hardinge told his stepson, "but Lord E. will tell you that Pollock (the military member) can give me no advice in an emergency or Mr. Millett (one of the civil service representatives) . . . although each in their separate departments understand their professional details."<sup>2</sup>

The nominal head of the military administration was the military member of the council, who stood between the executive head of the army, the commander-in-chief, and the governor-general in council. His role was advisory, and it was no doubt useful, if time-consuming, to subject the commander-in-chief's proposals to the scrutiny of another expert who would look at them from the administrative and financial standpoint. The real work of the army administration devolved upon the military board and its secretary (at the time in question Lieutenant-Colonel Stuart); each presidency had such a board, composed of the heads of the civil departments of the army. It was divided into six departments: general and miscellaneous; public works, roads and canals; draftsmen's; ordnance; commissariat; and stud. Its main responsibility was financial. All requests for ordnance

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<sup>1</sup>The Marquis of Dalhousie to Sir George Couper, 11 Aug. 1850 (Baird, J. G. A., Private Letters of the Marquess of Dalhousie, Edinburgh and London 1911, p. 156.)

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Sir Walter James, 7 April 1845. H.P.

stores, and estimates and charges for fortifications, military buildings, roads, and so on, were processed by the board and its indents were annually forwarded to the directors.

As with most such bodies, the military board had a propensity for making economies; in the Afghan war, for instance, instead of sending the Army of the Indus six 18-pounders as requested, it despatched twelve 9-pounders. Hardinge complained about the numerous reports sent him by the board undigested and with no suggestions, which he found hard to cope with, lacking as he did experience of the rules and regulations obtaining in India on the questions put before him. He solved this problem by "indoctrinating" Stuart with the war office procedure, and as a result "the execution of military business was greatly expedited."<sup>1</sup>

The commander-in-chief's role consisted chiefly in the handling of questions of discipline, equipment, morale, and military readiness as well as in the actual command in the field. For this reason, it was often much more valuable for him to be with the army rather than at the seat of government. A result of the need to provide two men, often a thousand miles apart, with a large staff was the growth of a cumbrous and expensive military administration in which much of the work was duplicated. The governor-general could himself send orders covering the movement of troops directly to the regiments involved, but the commander-in-chief was the normal channel for transmitting them. On the other hand, the latter

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Sir Robert Peel, 1 Aug. 1844. H. P. 1

could not order troops on service, or even make the common biennial or triennial relief, without the government's sanction. When the governor-general was with the army in the field, the question of the issuing of orders was complicated by his being, de facto, the government.

In effect the relations and responsibilities of the governor-general and the commander-in-chief were governed by precedents and personalities more than they were by constitutional procedure or forms. In 1786 Cornwallis made it a proviso of his accepting the governor-generalship that he be also appointed commander-in-chief, and four years later he himself conducted the campaign against Tipu Sultan. In 1799 Richard Wellesley proposed accompanying an army sent to reduce Seringapatam, to be told by his brother (later the Duke of Wellington) that "If I were in General Harris's situation and the governor-general were to join the army, I should quit it."<sup>1</sup> Lord Hastings played a considerable part in planning the operations against the Marathas between 1816 and 1818, while Auckland and Ellenborough both shared in the direction of the Afghan war, and the latter was with the army during the Gwalior campaign. There was, therefore, by 1845 a well-established precedent for the governor-general's accompanying or even commanding the army in the field.

The definition of their positions was further complicated by the interplay between the personalities and abilities

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<sup>1</sup>Fortescue, Hon. J. W., A History of the British Army, London 1927, xii, 337.

of the individual governors-general and commanders-in-chief. Although he was suspected of an undue proclivity to military advice, the autocratic Ellenborough forced Sir Jasper Nicolls into a relatively subordinate role, and he seems to have tried to exert a similar influence over Gough. Despite promises to accord his commander-in-chief "full military authority," Dalhousie soon quarrelled with Sir Charles Napier over a question of financial compensation for the sepoys, and Napier resigned. Dalhousie reduced his successor, Sir William Gomm, to a cypher.

The problems posed by the imprecision of the control over the army were exacerbated in the case of Hardinge and Lieutenant-General Gough, his commander-in-chief, by a major and prolonged crisis potentially requiring the use of armed force, but at the same time involving the subordination of military to diplomatic needs. Whilst planning the journey to the Upper Provinces that first brought him into personal contact with Gough, Hardinge voiced doubts about their association:

If we have any thing to do, I shall have one most serious difficulty - and that is my relations with the Commander in Chief. He is a good soldier - a good natured man, but very jealous. As his declared successor,<sup>1</sup> and being a Military Man, any interference in Military operations will not be taken well - and from what I hear and discover from his correspondence, the arrangements for moving and handling a large body of Men, will give me the greatest anxiety. I cannot interfere with these details without the appearance of superseding Gough . . .<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>When Hardinge first arrived in India, it was thought that Gough might have to resign for reasons of health, so the Governor-General was made provisional commander-in-chief on 31 May 1844.

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Sir Walter James, 18 Aug. 1845. H. P.

Although he hoped to "soften down any little asperities," Hardinge considered that to maintain a working relationship with Gough would be his most difficult task, "if we ever cross (into) the Punjab."<sup>1</sup> It is noteworthy that Hardinge's distrust of Gough's ability successfully to handle a large body of men was shared by both the other governors-general under whom the latter served. For his part, after the two men met, Gough told his son: "I like him (Hardinge) much, and he appeared ready to place every confidence in me."<sup>2</sup>

Thus Hardinge had a vague but fairly wide military authority with which to confront the threatening situation on the frontier. He showed himself ready to cooperate with Gough and, until the outbreak of hostilities, demonstrated little inclination to assume responsibilities rightfully belonging to the commander-in-chief. As governor-general, he had to temper military needs with political and financial considerations; the critics of his preparations for the war sometimes overlooked the necessity he was under to do this.

Until the Afghan war and the seizure of Sind, the Company's territorial expansion owed more to the need to provide the peace and order in which commerce can best flourish and to the energy and ambition of individual governors-general than it did to purely military requirements. But with the

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Sir Walter James, 21 Oct. 1845. H. P.

<sup>2</sup>Sir Hugh Gough to G. S. Gough, 2 Dec. 1845 (Rait, R. S., The Life and Campaigns of Hugh, First Viscount Gough, London 1903.)

closer identification of Indian and British interests, the security of India's frontier came to be of the utmost concern to the governments in London and Calcutta.

Increasingly in the eighteen-thirties and forties, British rule in India was coming to be regarded as an integral part of British policy and standing in Europe. King William IV expressed the enhanced position of India in his countrymen's estimation, and also the fears for its safety, when he urged upon the president of the board of control the necessity of watching the western frontier, for "this is a fine country, but it is nothing without its colonial possessions, especially India."<sup>1</sup> The threat to the north-west frontier was not a new one - although the protagonists had changed - but it seemed so menacing that more and more the resources and the attention of the Indian government were directed towards its defence. Whatever the reality behind this fear for British rule in the country, four successive governors-general in the space of a decade were involved in major wars on the frontier.

The struggle between the English and the French for ascendancy in the country was fought out on the vast Indian littoral during the eighteenth century. After the French were defeated in this phase of the contest, they turned their attention to the landward frontiers of India where the crumbling powers of Turkey and Persia could no longer effectively bar the road between the Mediterranean and Asia. In 1807,

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<sup>1</sup>William IV to J. C. Hobhouse, Oct. 1838. (Norris, J. A., The First Afghan War, Cambridge 1967, p. 6.)

the double shock of the Franco-Russian treaty of Tilsit and the appearance of a French general in Teheran caused grave concern in England. As a result, Lord Minto was instructed to take measures to prevent a hostile army from crossing the Indus and to cultivate as far as possible "the favourable opinion and co-operation" of Afghanistan, Sind, and the Punjab. Although missions were sent to all three countries, by June 1810, British concern had subsided and the governor-general was ordered to reduce military expenses to "within the narrowest bound that may be consistent with the publick security and interests."<sup>1</sup>

With the British frontier remaining on the Sutlej and the Russians still groping round the northern shore of the Caspian, a sense of impending crisis was postponed until 1826 when Persia was roundly defeated by Russia. When the latter country also defeated Turkey, Lord Ellenborough, the president of the board of control, became extremely disturbed:

The Directors are much afraid of the Russians. So am I, and the Russians begin to threaten us . . . I feel confident we shall have to fight the Russians on the Indus, and I have long had a presentiment that I should meet them there, and gain a great battle.<sup>2</sup>

In November 1829, Colonel de Lacy Evans's "Practicability of an Invasion of British India" was published. Ellenborough seized on the book as showing how easy such an invasion would be, "unless we determine to act as an Asiatic Power . . . It is not on the Indus that an enemy is to be met. If we do not meet him in Cabul, at the foot of the Hindu Koash, or its

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<sup>1</sup>Norris, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

passes, we had better remain on the Sutlege."<sup>1</sup>

Ellenborough proposed to counter the Russian threat by opening the Indus to British commerce - which in part implied the maintenance of the Sikh alliance - and this became the basis of the Indian government's foreign policy. In October 1831 Lord William Bentinck and Ranjit Singh reaffirmed the Anglo-Sikh alliance of 1809 at Rupar, but the Maharaja was forced to accept an interdiction of Punjabi expansion southward. Six months later, Colonel Henry Pottinger obtained a promise from the rulers of Hyderabad and Khairpur that non-military traffic might uninterruptedly use the Indus; the Khan of Bahawalpur and Ranjit Singh shortly followed suit.

Ranjit Singh's acquiescence in the opening of the Indus rather put the British under an obligation to him and made it more difficult to reach an understanding with Dost Muhammad Khan, the ruler of Kabul. Auckland saw the danger of this and was only lukewarm with regard to the opening of the Indus, though he thought it preferable to the use of military means. But already too much in the way of money and pains had been expended for the policy to be reversed. He was, moreover, worried that blocking Sikh expansion into Sind "may lead us further than we either wish or foresee, but the most passive policy is not always the most pacific . . ." <sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately for the British, they needed the support of both Dost Muhammad and Ranjit Singh for their policy in

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup>Auckland to Charles Metcalfe, 28 Oct. 1836. (Norris, p. 98)



Central Asia to have a chance of success, and the mutual antipathy of these two rulers presented them with a dilemma. Auckland favoured the Sikh alliance, for all Ranjit Singh's restlessness and strength, to one with a distant and weak power, even though support for Dost Muhammad might offer "great local advantage." Furthermore, he had no desire to see the Sikhs defeated by a Muslim union. However, Shah Suja, the former ruler of Afghanistan then in exile in British territory, was more acceptable to the Sikhs than was the Dost. With the tacit support of the British, he made an unsuccessful attempt in 1834 to recover his throne.

By this time, the advocates of "the maintenance of the real supremacy" of the British in India were beginning to exert considerable pressure on Auckland to intervene in Afghanistan or, as a preliminary, the Punjab. "With many of our statesmen and with all our soldiers there is a strong impatience for the possession of the Punjab," Auckland told the chairman of the court of directors.<sup>1</sup> Six years later this expansionist pressure was equally felt by Hardinge, who remarked that much as "young civilians and gallant soldiers" desired annexation of the Punjab, "even sexaginarrians might forget what is prudent, in the patriotic pride of giving to England's greatest conquest a frontier worthy of British India."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Auckland to Sir R. Jenkins, 23 Jan. 1840 (Bearce, G.D., British Attitudes towards India, 1784-1858, Oxford 1961, p. 194.)

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Hobhouse, 2 Sept. 1846 (Bearce, p. 193)

For a while, however, Auckland was able to stem this upsurge of imperial sentiment. In this he was aided by the opposition of Sir Henry Fane, the commander-in-chief, to schemes aiming at the annexation of the Punjab: "Every advance you might make beyond the Sutlej to the westward, in my opinion, adds to your military weakness."<sup>1</sup> Although Auckland was reluctant to advance British power on the north-west frontier he was acutely conscious of Ranjit Singh's failing health; he felt that anarchy would sweep the Punjab after the Sikh ruler's death, in which case the Indian government might be forced to intervene in the country. Furthermore, should there be an invasion from the west supported by a European power, Auckland had no intention of allowing the invaders to concentrate on the fertile plains of the Punjab, but would meet them on the Indus, "either in alliance with the Sikhs or in defiance of them."<sup>2</sup>

In November 1837, a Persian army appeared before Herat, to the consternation of the British, who mistakenly felt that the Russians were behind this move as a first step in their invasion of India. Alexander Burnes, Auckland's emissary in Kabul, tried unsuccessfully to have Dost Muhammad patch up his quarrel with Ranjit Singh over Peshawar. Burnes was told to inform the Afghan ruler that the British could only

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<sup>1</sup>Memorandum by Sir Henry Fane, 14 June 1837 (Norris, p. 110)

<sup>2</sup>Auckland's minute on Fane's memorandum, 14 June 1837 (Norris, p. 115)

offer him their "good offices" in mediating in the dispute, but no active support against their "old friend and firmly." Unable to proffer any concrete inducements to Dost Muhammad, Burnes left Kabul on 28 April 1838, and by mid-May Auckland had concluded that some form of intervention beyond the Indus was inevitable, for to leave Afghanistan to its fate would be to admit "absolute defeat."

The government was still reluctant to use force of its own and tried to encourage the Sikhs to support another attempt by Shah Shuja to regain his throne. On July 3, Sir William Macnaghten, secretary to the government and one of Auckland's closest advisers, and Ranjit Singh signed a draft treaty, their signatures being joined a fortnight later by that of Shah Shuja. Among the articles of this tripartite treaty was a provision that no one would cross the Punjab without a passport from Lahore. Under the final article, Shah Shuja undertook to "oppose any power having the design to invade the British and Sikh territories by force of arms, to the utmost of his ability."

While Shah Shuja set about recruiting his army, British troops began their concentration in Sind; officially they were merely accompanying the Afghan chief as an allied escort. Just before the Army of the Indus started its march on 10 December 1838, it was learned that the Persians had lifted the siege of Herat. While admitting that this was a very important event, Auckland, under pressure from the British envoy in Teheran, decided to continue the expedition, although one of

the two divisions was left behind to form a reserve. Even the defeat of a Russian expedition against Khiva could not now prevent the march of the Army of the Indus.

It was hoped the army would stay in Afghanistan only long enough to restore Shah Shuja. The failure to effect this rapidly and the disastrous retreat in the winter of 1841 put a severe strain on the Anglo-Sikh alliance, particularly as relief expeditions crossed the Punjab on their way to Afghanistan. Ranjit Singh intended to give the British neither active help nor active hindrance so long as the sovereignty of the Punjab was respected, but after his death in 1839, Sher Singh only just managed to restrain the sardars (chiefs) from attacking their allies. At the end of 1840, Auckland wanted to send a brigade of reinforcements through the Punjab to Kabul and intimated to the Durbar<sup>1</sup> that he expected it to be given a passage in accordance with the tripartite treaty. He told Hobhouse he was prepared to fight the Sikhs if they refused this request, but "we may yet remain friends if the passage of our brigade be cheerfully granted."<sup>2</sup> The brigade passed through the Punjab without disturbance, but Sikh co-operation was only grudgingly given.

On the British side, as the news from Afghanistan deteriorated, there was no lack of extreme advice as to what should be done with the Punjab. Macnaghten, for example,

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<sup>1</sup>The court and, in effect, the cabinet

<sup>2</sup>Auckland to Hobhouse, 18/19 Oct. 1840 (Norris, p. 335)

could hardly wait for the day when the country was "macadamised." Fane's successor, Sir Jasper Nicolls, wrote that "Unless a large accession of Punjab territory comes in to connect us safely with Caubul . . . we must withdraw."<sup>1</sup>

Once again Auckland tried to stem annexationist ambitions. He told Macnaghten that "even if things were very much more pressing than, I hope, they are, you should know for us that it is not in India convenient, or even possible, from May to November, to assist our best friends or to quarrel with our worst enemies."<sup>2</sup> But by March 1841, moderate counsels were again losing ground and George Clerk, the governor-general's agent on the frontier, proposed that a British force should march on Lahore to support Sher Singh in the contest developing for control of the Punjab. Though Auckland was not prepared to order what was virtually an invasion of an allied state, he declared himself willing to use force in support of Sher Singh if the Maharaja and a majority of his people desired it.<sup>3</sup> According to Henry Lawrence, a force of 10,000 or 11,000 men was actually told off and under preparation at Karnal, to move into the Punjab under the command of Major-General Sir James Lumley.

When Peel ordered Auckland's recall late in 1841, the governor-general's Afghan policy was clearly in disarray,

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<sup>1</sup>Nicoll's journal, 20 May 1841 (Norris, p. 350)

<sup>2</sup>Auckland to Macnaghten, 6 May 1840 (Norris, p. 317)

<sup>3</sup>Government to Clerk, 18 Feb. and 29 Mar. 1841 (Cunningham, J.D., A History of the Sikhs, New Delhi 1966, p. 214)

although news had not yet reached London of the annihilation of the Army of the Indus. His place was taken by Ellenborough, who more than any one else had been instrumental in the initiation of a forward policy on the frontier.

However, shortly before leaving for India, Ellenborough told Wellington that he hoped that "the necessity will not arise while I am in India of making war either on the Punjab or on Nepaul," though he did ask advice on "the best mode of attacking the former country in the event his troops were attacked on their way to and from Afghanistan."<sup>1</sup> This was the tenor of all his correspondence. He declared himself unwilling to precipitate a clash with the Sikhs, but because of the feuding within the Punjab, he felt that a conflict was inevitable; ". . . it can hardly be deferred much longer."<sup>2</sup> He claimed to want to see the Sikh state in the condition it had been under Ranjit Singh's rule, but he had no intention of seeing British rights infringed - in his view, the sheer preponderance of the Company had overthrown any balance of power that might have existed in India, and "The least appearance of weakness or of hesitation would lead to a general combination of all against a foreign and necessarily an unpopular government."<sup>3</sup> Ellenborough's seriousness in professing

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<sup>1</sup>Ellenborough to Wellington, 26 Oct. 1841 (Lord Colchester, The Indian Administration of Lord Ellenborough, pp. 159-60)

<sup>2</sup>Ellenborough to Queen Victoria, 16 Sept. 1842 (Colchester, p. 47)

<sup>3</sup>Ellenborough to Queen Victoria, 20 Oct. 1843 (Colchester, p. 98)

to want a strong Sikh state as his neighbour may be doubted; not only did he regard an Anglo-Sikh struggle as inevitable, but he also offered the Durbar the fort of Jalalabad, in the hope that the Sikhs would both over-tax their strength and be brought into conflict with the Afghans.

In the meantime, Ellenborough's preoccupation with the Punjab had a direct bearing on the policies he adopted towards others of the Indian states. In particular, he was afraid that if he became involved in lengthy operations against Gwalior, the Sikhs might seize the opportunity to cross the Sutlej. In the event the Marathas were defeated quickly and crushingly; nonetheless Ellenborough felt that his preparations vis à vis the Sikhs were still not what they ought to be in the event of a war.

I earnestly hope that we may not be obliged to cross the Sutlej in December next,

he told Wellington.

We shall not be ready so soon . . . Depend upon it I will not engage in such an operation hastily or unnecessarily, and I will do all I can beforehand to secure certain success should I be obliged to undertake it.<sup>1</sup>

He estimated that he could be prepared for anything by November 1845, when he would be able to cross the Sutlej with 33,000 infantry, 7,000 cavalry, and 162 guns. He complained, however, of the lack of a good general, and he actually tried to persuade Hardinge to fill the gap, dangling before him the prospect of a campaign that would add

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<sup>1</sup>Ellenborough to Wellington, 15 Feb. 1844 (Colchester, p. 424)

the Punjab and Kashmir to the British possessions.

Among his contemporaries, much of the credit for the preparations made for the war that broke out eighteen months after he left India was given to Ellenborough. In the "Quarterly Review" of June 1846. Reverend G. R. Gleig suggested that Ellenborough had prepared everything on the frontier for war and that Hardinge had added very little to what had been done by his predecessor and was only prevented by a feeling of delicacy from counter-manding those preparations.<sup>1</sup>

When Ellenborough arrived in India in February 1842, he found that Auckland had concentrated large numbers of troops on the frontier as an army of reserve for the Afghan war. He had the task of disbanding this army and the opportunity of re-distributing it in accordance with his strategic requirements. Although he talked in March 1842 of policing all India from the Sutlej with "a large, well equipped, and well composed force" under the commander-in-chief himself,<sup>2</sup> such a scheme was not really practicable since most of the regiments were needed to garrison Bengal. In re-distributing the troops, Ellenborough shifted the axis of the peace-time army towards the frontier, establishing new stations in the Simla hills and moving the support

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<sup>1</sup>Quarterly Review, June 1846. Vol 78, No. 155, pp 175-215

<sup>2</sup>Despatch of Ellenborough, 15 Mar. 1842 (A History of the Freedom Movement, Karachi 1960, ii, 79)



force from Karnal to Ambala, which move owed something to the insanitary conditions prevailing at Karnal. In 1838 the two regiments at Ludhiana were the only troops near the frontier; when Ellenborough left India there were about 14,000 men and 48 field guns near the Sutlej. Probably the main reason for this force not being larger was the shortage of barrack accommodation, for although the governor-general was not prepared for an early war with the Sikhs, he was less governed by the fear that a large concentration might be regarded as provocative by the Durbar than was his successor; in fact he thought that the chances of the Sikhs launching a full-scale invasion of the protected Sikh states were slim.

Although, unlike Hardinge, Ellenborough had little military experience, he showed an active interest in the Indian army; so much so that his successor said of him that he omitted "no precautions which the most prudent general would take . . ."<sup>1</sup> Ellenborough felt that the only means of controlling the Sikhs and the other unsubdued nations on both sides of the Indus was to demonstrate to them that the Company possessed a well-equipped and mobile army backed by secure communications, and he turned his attention to ensuring that his troops were prepared for any contingency on the frontier.

The governor-general realized that the army's first

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Sir Robert Peel, 1 Aug. 1844. H. P. ii

need was a period of recuperation after several years of war. However, by the end of 1842 he reported that within twelve days he could concentrate three European and eleven native infantry regiments, one European and two native cavalry regiments, two irregular cavalry regiments, and 24 guns on or near the frontier. This force, he was confident, was enough to cope with problems related to the Punjab. Unfortunately he was to a large extent dependent on the chiefs of the protected states for transport animals.

Towards the end of 1843 Ellenborough began the building of a small fort at Ferozepore "to cover the battering train I shall gradually collect there and the necessary stores."<sup>1</sup> At the outbreak of hostilities in 1845 the siege guns and their stores were still at Delhi, and their delay in reaching the frontier hampered operations. Similarly, a new road planned to connect Meerut with Ellenborough's "great station" of Ambala did not materialize in time to expedite the march of the reserve division from the former station in December 1845. Although the governor-general stressed the need to improve the Company's artillery, few batteries had turned over from 6-pounder to 9-pounder guns, despite the fact that the Sikhs were known to possess a large number of heavy-calibre cannon. Another project Ellenborough was contemplating before his recall was the establishment of a fortified camp between Mudki and Jagraon.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ellenborough to Wellington, 17 Nov. 1842 (Colchester, p. 301)

<sup>2</sup>Malleson, Col. G.B., The Decisive Battles of India, 1746-1849, London 1885, p. 355

One act of Ellenborough's which was to have a considerable bearing on the war was the building of a pontoon-train, although the boats took much longer to have assembled on the river than he expected. One of the last things he did before leaving India was to order a thousand horses from Sydney; by the time these arrived at the end of the war the remount situation had become serious. Just prior to his departure, the muzzle-loading "Brunswick" rifle was being gradually introduced into the native army, as were canvas haversacks, which replaced the old unwieldy knapsack, and forage caps.

Ellenborough showed considerable awareness of the logistic needs of a Sikh war and went far towards meeting them during his short tenure of office, but his claim that the army would "be equal to any operation" by November 1845,<sup>1</sup> overlooked the habitual slowness, and even carelessness, of the Indian government in giving practical shape to proposals aimed at improving the army's readiness for war. Although Ellenborough had begun the deployment necessary for a war with the Sikhs and had improved the weaponry and kit of the army, his reforms were too superficial to strike at the malaise affecting the Indian, and particularly the Bengal, army, and many of his plans simply did not materialize. Thus when Hardinge arrived in India he found a discontented army suffering from low morale and declining discipline

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<sup>1</sup>Ellenborough to Wellington, 9 May 1844 (Colchester, pp 438-9)

whose distribution was such that there was no possibility of its successfully checking a Sikh invasion at the frontier. Whether or not his son was correct in suggesting that Hardinge's appointment was due to his military experience, India needed a soldier governor-general as the frontier became increasingly disturbed.

## II. HARDINGE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CRISIS, 1844-5

It can never be easy for a man assuming a great responsibility of the sort Hardinge undertook when he arrived in India to ignore the fate of a predecessor who was recalled for having taken too independent a line. In June 1844 Lord Ellenborough received an order from the court of directors recalling him to England. They objected particularly to his contemptuous treatment of the court, but also took exception to his controversial annexation of Sind and to other lesser sins of omission or commission. The failure of Ellenborough's attempts to add to the powers of the governor-general, and the government's refusal to give him a free hand with the Punjab, were probably not lost on Hardinge who observed that "as the Punjab was to be forbidden fruit, I really think he is glad to be relieved . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Before Ellenborough returned home he reported that "All India is in a state of profound peace. In the Punjab there is more of a pacific appearance than at any time since the murder of Shere Singh."<sup>2</sup> Hardinge went out to India with the intention of preserving the state of tranquillity his predecessor claimed to have left behind him, and both Sir Robert

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<sup>1</sup>Ellenborough to Wellington, 2 July 1844. (Colchester, p. 446)

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 1 Aug. 1844. H. P. 1

Peel and Captain Shepherd, the chairman of the court, supported him in this. "Peel writes me over again," Hardinge told his wife, "that returning from India a maintainer of Peace, I shall be better received than if I had conquered the Punjaub."<sup>1</sup> However, although Peel warned Hardinge against annexing the Punjab, he did not explicitly forbid it.

In a parting address to Hardinge at a banquet of the court in June 1844, Captain Shepherd also urged him to observe a pacific policy as far as was possible:

It has always been the desire of the Court that the government of the East Indies Company should be eminently just, moderate, and conciliatory; but the supremacy of our power must be maintained when necessary by the force of our arms.<sup>2</sup>

In the opinion of the governor-general's son and private secretary, Captain Charles Hardinge, "The selection of a distinguished soldier who also possessed the experience of a cabinet minister rather pointed to the anticipation of war."<sup>3</sup> But perhaps the cabinet's intentions were more subtle than he realized. In thanking the Indian army for its early victories in the Sikh war Peel told the commons that

It was mainly on account of the military character and high reputation of my gallant friend that he was enabled to control and keep in check the aspirations of more ardent and impetuous minds bent upon the invasion and conquest of the Punjaub.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Lady Hardinge, 21 Mar. 1845. H. P.

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge, C. S., pp 49-50

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p. 48

<sup>4</sup>Hansard, Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, lxxxiv, 388

It is not unusual for a soldier placed in a position of high civil authority to be found to be surprisingly flexible, perhaps out of a fear of being thought militaristic. In June 1845 Hardinge told Major Broadfoot that

Every despatch from England inculcates a pacific policy: and we must show that military men in the conduct of affairs usually transacted by civil officers, on which peace or war hangs by a slender thread, can be trusted for their prudence.<sup>1</sup>

That these instructions from home were not as pacific as Hardinge claimed is suggested by a letter Ellenborough sent his successor in which he complained of the court's hostility toward him, and added: "They would let you eat, what they would not let me touch, and think conquest of the Punjab so easy."<sup>2</sup>

Apart from these reminders not to engage unnecessarily in a war, it seems that Hardinge was left to his own devices with regard to the formulation of policy. He complained to Sir Walter James, his stepson, that he had received "one sheet of note paper from Lord Ripon,<sup>3</sup> and not much more by the last Mail, approving of my policy, which is in accordance with my instructions, not one word of which instructions I have ever received!"<sup>4</sup> A fortnight later he complained of the "absolute absence of a bare suggestion" as to the policy he should pursue.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Maj. Broadfoot, 14 June 1845. (Broadfoot, Maj. W., The Career of Major George Broadfoot, London 1888, p. 312)

<sup>2</sup>Ellenborough to Hardinge, 5 April 1845 (Hasrat, B.J., Anglo-Silk Relations, 1799-1849, Hoshiarpur 1968, p. 239)

<sup>3</sup>Ripon was the ailing President of the Board of Control; Hardinge held him in low regard.

<sup>4</sup>Hardinge to Sir Walter James, 7 April 1845. H.P.

<sup>5</sup>Hardinge to Sir Walter James, 21 April 1845. H.P.

Sir George Arthur, the governor of Bombay, told Hardinge that Ellenborough had complained to him of a similar neglect on the part of the home authorities. In Hardinge's case they preferred endorsing his policies after they had been put into effect to proposing some of their own. In August 1845 Charles Hardinge told Lady James that "Sir Henry has had most satisfactory from the Home authorities. The Court are in very good humour and have given him 'carte blanche' as regards the settlement of Punjab affairs."<sup>1</sup>

This lack of a systematic policy within which he could frame his actions must have been trying to Hardinge who, while he was an able administrator, lacked the independence and vision of Ellenborough and the forcefulness and exaggerated self-assertion of Dalhousie. He became too immersed in the minutiae of, particularly, military administration to take a large and consistent view of the wider issues posed by the proximity to the British frontier of a powerful, if nearly anarchic, neighbour.

It was widely felt in India that Hardinge tended to lean on his subordinates, in particular Henry Lawrence. Lawrence naturally denied this:

Because Lord Hardinge was always cordial and kind to his secretaries, some have jumped to the conclusion that he was unduly influenced by them. Far otherwise: he was ready to hear the opinion of everyone who had a right to give one. But no Governor-General ever more decidedly took his own line, and chalked out his own course, than Lord Hardinge.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Capt. C. S. Hardinge to Lady James, 18 Aug. 1845. H.P. iv

<sup>2</sup>Edwardes, Sir Herbert, and Merivale, Herman, Life of Sir Henry Lawrence, London 1873, p. 430



Hardinge had that characteristic of a long-service administrator, the ability to see every side of a question, which made it difficult for him to arrive at the ready solutions of men like Ellenborough and Dalhousie. Although many of the decisions he took in India were controversial all his actions were not only carefully thought out but also on occasion showed considerable foresight; Palmerston's criticism of him that he lacked judgement was certainly not borne out during the time that he was solely responsible for Britain's most valued possession.

Hardinge's background showed him to have been an able administrator, concerned to know all the facts of a case before pronouncing upon it; "he always understands what he undertakes, and undertakes nothing but what he understands," Wellington said of him.<sup>1</sup> His constant requests for reports kept his subordinates alert, and the memoranda of which they formed the basis covered a multitude of subjects. Hardinge was methodical and extremely industrious, and his tact and consideration resulted in the harmonious cooperation of his subordinates. Perhaps the most valuable quality he brought to his task was a high sense of duty coupled with a lack of personal ambition. In 1842 he had declined, on personal grounds, invitations to command the army in India, but when called upon two years later to replace Ellenborough he felt it his imperative duty to waive all such private considerations.

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge, C. S., p. 31

The new governor-general was a "peninsular veteran" at a time when that epithet was still a highly respected one - it was only after the Crimean war that it came to be almost a term of abuse.<sup>1</sup> His experience peculiarly fitted him for the rule of India when affairs on the frontier were so unsettled. "Fortunately," he told his stepson, "a large proportion of the business is Military and administrative as concerning the army - and here my Ordnance and War Office and House of Commons education in Estimates is of great use."<sup>2</sup> On another occasion he wrote that "Two years of Cabinet was an invaluable schooling."<sup>3</sup>

In 1811 Hardinge, then a young staff officer, was responsible for having strongly urged<sup>4</sup> General Cole to make the advance that saved the day at the battle of Albuera. His experience as deputy quartermaster-general to the Portuguese army, which he regarded as being in some respects similar to the Company's sepoy army, must have stood him in good stead with regard to the supply problems posed by a war with the Sikhs. Whilst on the Portuguese staff Hardinge attracted Wellington's favourable attention as an officer of intelligence, and he always retained the Duke's esteem.

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<sup>1</sup>Virtually all the generals and many of the regimental commanders in India at this time - men like Sir Hugh Gough, Sir Charles Napier, Sir Harry Smith, Sir Robert Dick, Sir Robert Sale, Colin Campbell, Sir Joseph Thackwell, Sir John McCaskill and Brigadier Gurney - were veterans of the peninsular war.

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Sir Walter James, 7 April 1845. H. P.

<sup>3</sup>Hardinge to Sir Walter James, 18 Aug. 1845. H. P.

<sup>4</sup>For the controversy over whether Hardinge urged or actually ordered the advance see D. N. B., xxiv, 342-3.

After Waterloo, where he had distinguished himself as British liaison officer at Prussian headquarters, Hardinge took his seat in the commons as a tory. In 1823 Wellington made him clerk to the ordnance, and five years later he was appointed secretary at war. This last position he again filled for nearly three years from September 1841, his actions during this period earning him the title of the "soldier's friend." He was promoted to the rank of lieutenant-general on the same day in 1841 as Sir Hugh Gough, his future commander-in-chief in India, but was lower down on the roll.

Ellenborough, in one of his last letters to Broadfoot before leaving India, confidently predicted that Hardinge would continue his policies: "He is my confidential friend with whom I have communicated upon all public affairs for thirty years."<sup>1</sup> Because the limited instructions given him differed little from those given his predecessor, and because it was not in his character to reverse an established policy without first studying the principles involved most carefully, Hardinge did indeed initially continue the course of action followed by Ellenborough. In March 1845 he told his precursor that he had written a letter "desiring it to be understood and pointed out to the Rajas, that your foreign policy was to be unchanged," but it "never was communicated . . ."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ellenborough to Broadfoot, 17 June 1844 (Broadfoot, p. 208)

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Ellenborough, 22 Mar. 1845. (Broadfoot, p. 297)

While he was still on his way out to his new charge Hardinge was already reaching his own conclusions as to the course he would adopt, in particular with regard to the improvement of India's military system. By January 1845, having taken into consideration the turbulent state of affairs at Lahore, Hardinge had worked out the general line of his policy vis à vis the Punjab. He did not aim at the subjugation of the country, but rather preferred to see a strong government there, capable of subordinating its army and acting as a buffer in front of British India. He felt that it would be morally wrong to attack the Sikhs - he told Ellenborough that the Company had no "case for devouring our ally in his adversity"<sup>1</sup> - and argued that the more his government strove to maintain peace, "the more honourably we shall stand justified in the judgment of our countrymen."<sup>2</sup>

Hardinge was, however, rather at a loss as to how he could reestablish the authority of the Sikh government - it was not until after the first Sikh war, when the power of the Khalsa<sup>3</sup> was greatly reduced, that he felt himself in a position to effect this. In 1845 the only means he could see of restoring the Durbar's paramountcy within the Punjab was an invasion aimed at the subjugation of the Sikh army; but that was out of the question since without a permanent British occupation the operation would have to be repeated

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Ellenborough, 23 Jan. 1845 (Broadfoot, p. 276)

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Broadfoot, 14 June 1845 (Broadfoot, pp. 312-13)

<sup>3</sup>The term referred literally to land held immediately from the government. It came to denote the fighting brotherhood of the Sikhs, and hence the Sikh army.

periodically. He concluded at that time that only as a military power could the Sikhs hope to thwart Russian and Muslim ambitions, but the danger to the British in this was obvious, especially since Sikh soldiers were successfully extorting from their government twice the pay earned by the Company's sepoys.<sup>1</sup>

Hardinge told Broadfoot that he regarded the extension of the British frontier as very undesirable: "A strong Sikh government as our advanced guard, occupying the five rivers between the Sutlege and the Indus, is a sound military and political arrangement."<sup>2</sup> But he felt that if the Sikh government could not be bolstered the only other alternative was British occupation of the Punjab. He did not, however, intend to be forced to disperse a mutinous Sikh army in the interests of "influential men at Lahore" whose chief concern was the retention of their property and power, and to discourage the sardars from holding such expectations he warned the Durbar that if he crossed the Sutlej it would be on his, and on no one else's, terms.

Although there was little chance of a permanent Sikh government being created whilst its army was out of control, the Indian government was determined as far as possible to respect the treaty of Lahore of 1809. Hardinge was anxious

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 7 Jan. 1845. H. P. 1

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Broadfoot, 14 June 1845 (Broadfoot, p. 312)

to do everything he could to support Maharaja Dhalip Singh, and overtures made in February 1845 by Gulab Singh, the most powerful of the hill chiefs, in the hope of securing British support for the overthrow of the young ruler, were firmly rejected. While the governor-general hoped that the Sikh government might reassert its authority, he nonetheless was forced reluctantly to the conclusion that this would be an unlikely outcome:

The Punjab must . . . be Sikh or British; and I see no elements out of which a Sikh Government can by possibility be constructed. The delay is merely a postponement of the settlement of the question; at the same time we must bear in mind that as yet no cause of war has been given.<sup>1</sup>

The deterioration of Anglo-Sikh relations owed a great deal to the instability in the Punjab that followed the death of Ranjit Singh in June 1839: The governmental institutions in the Punjab were comparatively new and weak and could only be used effectively by a strong personality, but after 1839 no such ruler could be found. The anarchy at Lahore caused the British to doubt the value of the Punjab as a buffer state and gave rise to fears in Calcutta that the increasing disregard of governmental control in a warlike nation would lead to an invasion of the protected Sikh states. The Sikh government, on the other hand, with its existence constantly threatened by the insubordination of the army, sought to turn hostile and ambitious eyes away from itself by raising

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Ellenborough, 23 Oct. 1845 (Broadfoot, p. 355)

the spectre of a British invasion. The suspicions of one side fed upon those of the other until an Anglo-Sikh war was regarded as inevitable, and thirty-five years of alliance and even friendship were forgotten.

It has been suggested that the British encouraged the anarchy in the Punjab not only by busily preparing for war but also by actively promoting the disorder in the country. According to one historian of the Sikhs, a study of the Lahore news-letters shows that the "British had . . . an active hand in fomenting the troubles at the court of Lahore."<sup>1</sup> As evidence of this Kohli and other nationalist writers point to acts on the part of the political agents on the frontier which could be interpreted as being hostile to the Sikh state. In any tension arising from a frontier dispute acts of this sort are often committed by both sides, but they do not necessarily reflect official policy.

George Russell Clerk, who was appointed agent on the frontier in April 1840, has been accused by Sikh writers of having set the pattern of British complicity in stirring up unrest in the Punjab by trying to use a rift between Maharaja Sher Singh and his chief minister, Dhian Singh, to have the latter, who was inimical to the British, removed. Clerk is also charged with having tried to engineer the return to Lahore of the Sindhanwalias, a family then living in the protected states after having been defeated by Sher Singh in the

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<sup>1</sup>Sita Ram Kohli, foreword to Gupta, Dr. H. R., Panjab on the Eve of First Sikh War, Hoshiarpur 1956

struggle for power that followed the death of Ranjit Singh's eldest son, Kharak Singh, in November 1840. According to his critics his intention was either to convulse the Durbar or to create so even a balance within it that the contending factions would turn to the British for help.

Atar Singh, who headed this powerful family, was unsuccessful in his attempts to enlist the support of Colonel Richmond, Clerk's successor, for a coup planned by himself and the princes Peshora Singh and Kashmira Singh. Richmond would allow him to remain in British territory only as long as he and his followers lived peaceably and made no attempt "openly (to) promote any project prejudicial to peace and order in the Punjab."<sup>1</sup> However Atar Singh was able to leave Thanesar to join the princes, much to Ellenborough's regret. The governor-general thereafter empowered his agent to use any degree of compulsion to prevent anyone with hostile designs against the Sikh government from using British territory to further his ends, telling Richmond that "while we protect our own rights nothing will be done to impair the independence of our neighbours."<sup>2</sup>

Shortly after this incident Richmond was replaced by Major George Broadfoot, whose appointment by Ellenborough was warmly approved by Hardinge. The latter felt that Broadfoot would be more decisive than his predecessor, whom Hardinge

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<sup>1</sup>Col. Richmond to James Thomason, 26 Sept. 1843 (Gupta, p. lxii)

<sup>2</sup>Ellenborough to Queen Victoria, 20 Oct. 1843. (Colchester, p. 98)



regarded as having fallen under the influence of one of his assistants, Lieutenant Cunningham, "a perfect Sikh." The Sikhs were known to dislike Broadfoot for his high-handedness when thirty months previous to his appointment he had escorted Shah Shuja's family through the Punjab, and many observers felt that his being made the agent on the frontier greatly increased the probability of a war. The Durbar complained that Broadfoot's attitude was one of hostility, and Hardinge admitted that the political agent's anxiety to prevent the Sikhs "trying it on" was sometimes exaggerated, but the latter's many critics have overlooked examples on his part of moderation. While always watchful and quick to check Sikh depredations, Broadfoot urged on his assistants the need for forbearance. He wrote to Captain P. Nicolson, the assistant agent at Ferozepore, to correct a mistaken impression of the Indian government's attitude held by that officer: "In one of your letters you speak as if our Government was not sincere in its endeavours to maintain peace . . . nothing can be further from the truth."<sup>1</sup> Broadfoot's actions, and the governor-general's approval of them, are indicative of nothing worse than a petty insistence that the smallest of the Company's treaty rights be respected by the Sikhs.

At the end of 1844 Peshora Singh left Ambala, where he had been living since the failure of his attempt to overthrow Hira Singh, with the intention of returning to Lahore. According to Dr. Gupta this was done "obviously with the connivance of Major Broadfoot . . . who was using his cunning

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<sup>1</sup> Broadfoot, pp. 366-7

and guile in fomenting these troubles."<sup>1</sup> Whether or not this charge of provocation had any substance, it was true that Broadfoot was told not to interfere actively in the affairs of the Sikh government and was instructed to prove by his actions the desire of the Indian government to keep faith with Lahore. In January 1845 Hardinge reported to Peel that he had "given the most decisive orders to every authority Civil and Military on the Frontier not to interfere" in the affairs of Lahore. In fact, so reluctant was Hardinge to take advantage of a friendly power in the hour of its distress, that he alleged himself "disposed to give assistance to the Sikh Government if such a course could in prudence be pursued."<sup>2</sup>

If the British and the Sikhs were not fast friends, they were at least allies, and there were few major areas of dispute between them, although there were jurisdictional wrangles over the status of the protected Sikh states. Among the latter two issues frequently recurred, one concerning the alleged right of the Sikhs to cross the Sutlej, the other having regard to Lahore's claim that the Maharaja's cis-Sutlej subjects and estates were exempt from the jurisdiction of the Indian government's courts. Ranjit Singh himself had not pressed the latter point.

On the first issue the Sikh government seemed determined to give practical effect to their claim, at the same time testing

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<sup>1</sup>Gupta, p. xx

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 7 Jan. 1845. H.P. 1

the will of the Indian government. On several occasions during the course of 1845 bodies of Sikhs made incursions into British-protected territory. In late March two officers and two hundred ghorcharhas, or irregular cavalry, crossed the river either to relieve or to strengthen the detachment of mounted police normally kept at Kot Kapura. Broadfoot came on the scene as the Sikhs were recrossing the Sutlej and, alleging that the villagers of Talwandi had been plundered, he captured the leaders, extracted compensation, and then set the men free. His ostensible reason for this high-handed action being rather flimsy, he reported that his intention had been to "do no more than necessary to convince the Durbar not to make further such incursions."<sup>1</sup> Hardinge entirely approved his agent's conduct in this affair. In June some Sikh cavalry again crossed the Sutlej, but this time Broadfoot readily accepted Lahore's explanation. At the end of July Lal Singh Adalati and a few followers tried to cross the river and were turned back, to the annoyance of the Durbar which claimed they were on official business. Thereafter General Littler posted troops to prevent further crossings.

The reaction of the home authorities to these incursions was rather irresolute. Initially they authorized Hardinge to forbid the Durbar from sending troops over the river for administrative purposes, but then in August Ripon forwarded to him,

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<sup>1</sup>Broadfoot, p. 299

to his irritation, a memorandum by Clerk which upheld the right of the Sikh government to administer its possessions across the Sutlej.<sup>1</sup> On the other issue - whether or not the Indian courts had jurisdiction over the Maharaja's subjects and possessions on the left bank of the river - the Sikh government met with some success when it approached Richmond on the matter.

There were also lesser disputes in which the British attitude has been termed provocative. One of these concerned the treasure sent by Raja Suchet Singh, one of the Dogra rulers, to Ferozepore for safe-keeping just before his death. The Sikhs were led to expect that this would be turned over to them on application, but claims to the money by the Raja's widow and by Gulab Singh, his brother, gave pause to the negotiations. The Durbar produced a forged renunciation of her rights by Suchet Singh's widow and forced Gulab Singh, who was then its prisoner, to sign it in return for his freedom. The widow, however, wrote to Broadfoot requesting him not to part with the money. War came before the problem could be resolved and the treasure was eventually accepted as part of the price of Kashmir. The British in this instance were guilty of nothing worse than mismanagement - certainly no provocation was intended - and the Sikh resort to forgery hardly gave Lahore a right to complain.

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<sup>1</sup>Rumours reached Hardinge that the home government intended to replace Broadfoot with Clerk, indicating a reversal of policy; however nothing came of them.

Incidents of the kind mentioned above, while contributing in a small way to the tension, were usually smoothed over by the restraint of one side or the other - on one occasion, for example, the Amritsar division of the Sikh army refused to attack the British at Jawahir Singh's urging because it considered the Company had given no offence. But what worried the Durbar considerably more than brief jurisdictional wrangles was what it regarded as a provocative level of military preparation on the left bank of the Sutlej.

The Sikhs did not deny the abstract right of the Company to provide for the security of its territories, but felt that in their weak state they could hardly be thought of as a menace. They were therefore bound to regard any addition to British military strength on the frontier with suspicion, and put pressure on the Indian government to reverse the flow of men, equipment and supplies towards the northwest. Late in September 1845 Broadfoot reported that the army panchayats, or elders elected by the soldiers, who had assumed the government of the Punjab, had declared they "desired peace, but that if troops marched from our stations to Loodeeana and Ferozepore, they would march too."<sup>1</sup>

Towards the close of 1843 the Durbar moved 3000 cavalry towards Kasur in response to the reinforcement by the British of their garrisons at Ambala, Ludhiana, and Ferozepore.

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<sup>1</sup>Broadfoot to the Secretary to the Government of India (F. Currie), 26 Sept. 1845. (Broadfoot, p. 348)

Hira Singh, who was then vazir, or chief minister, was reported to have told Broadfoot in the new year that the Khalsa were afraid that now the English were rid of their Gwalior entanglement they were marching towards Ferozepore with hostile designs against the Punjab. Hira Singh had tried to reassure the Khalsa but himself asked for - and some weeks later received - assurances of the Indian government's continued friendship.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless Sikh reinforcements were sent to Kasur, but were withdrawn when some of the regiments at the Company's frontier stations marched to Sind. By September 1844 Hardinge felt that efforts to persuade the Durbar that no aggressive policy was being planned by his government had been successful.<sup>2</sup>

Early in January 1845 the Lahore akhbar<sup>3</sup> at Ambala reported that the commander-in-chief had told his troops to be in readiness, "for it was uncertain how soon they might be called on to march, and that they must be in light marching order, so that they may be able to march with every thing necessary at four hours' notice . . ." He added that an order to march on Ferozepore was expected to be given shortly and that the agents of the protected Sikh chiefs had been told how much carriage they would have to provide.<sup>4</sup> Against the

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<sup>1</sup>News-letter of 1 Jan. 1844, Lahore. (Gupta)

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 21 Sept. 1844. H. P. i

<sup>3</sup>News-writer; in this context the akhbar was in effect an intelligence agent.

<sup>4</sup>Translation of an extract from a report by the Lahore akhbar at Ambala. (British Sessional Papers, 1846, xxxi, p. 181, No. 9)

advice of the moderates in the government, Rani Jindan, a widow of Ranjit Singh and mother of the youthful Maharaja Dhalip Singh, who effectively ruled the Punjab through the agency of her brother Jawahir Singh, showed the akhbar's report to the Durbar and to the panchayats. These bodies decided to move troops towards the Sutlej, giving as excuse the scarcity of forage near Lahore.

In reply to Broadfoot's inquiry about the rumours of his preparations, Gough said that they were absurd and that he had scrupulously avoided doing anything that savoured of interference in Sikh affairs; the various measures that had been taken arose from the ordinary needs of peace-time soldiering, he added. This was the position adopted by Hardinge.

Sir Hugh Gough's orders were the usual inspection of the troops - and although Major Broadfoot is extremely anxious that the Head Quarters should withdraw to Meerut I must say under existing circumstances that Umballa is the Commander-in-Chief's proper position."<sup>1</sup>

Although Hardinge did not accede to Broadfoot's request that headquarters be removed to Meerut, the attitude of his government was still very conciliatory. Frederick Currie, the secretary to the Indian government, told the agent that he was acting entirely in accordance with the spirit of his instructions by trying to avoid doing anything which would alarm the Sikh government or army.

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 7 Feb. 1845. H. P. 1

British interference in the internal affairs of the Punjab must not only be strictly abstained from,

he wrote,

but every act on our part that could be laid hold of by the Durbar, or by any faction in the Lahore territory, as a plea for expecting British aid, must be studiously avoided . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Sikh troop movements made after the report of the akhbar at Ambala prompted Gough to press on the government the need to strengthen the frontier stations. Currie sent Broadfoot copies of the correspondence between the governor-general and the commander-in-chief on this subject and told him that it would be left to his discretion whether or not reinforcements should immediately be sent to the frontier, although he added that it would be preferable to delay their arrival until April when the rise in the river would prevent the Sikhs being alarmed.<sup>2</sup>

In January 1845 Hardinge agreed to the building of further barrack accommodation at Ferozepore, for the reception of three more regiments, one of them European. At the end of February the foreign department instructed Broadfoot to tell the Durbar that the barrack for European infantry at Ferozepore had long been planned, and its completion had been delayed out of a desire to avoid misrepresentation; he was to

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<sup>1</sup>Currie to Broadfoot, 13 Jan. 1845. (Broadfoot, p. 263)

<sup>2</sup>Currie to Broadfoot, 25 Jan. 1845. (The War in India: Despatches of the Right Honourable Lt-Gen. Viscount Hardinge, G. C. B., etc., London 1846)



add that until then the British force at that station had "remained of the same strength as before," but in view of the anarchy at Lahore the barrack was now being completed and the garrison reinforced "by an additional force of Native Infantry." However, Broadfoot was also to inform the Durbar's vakil, or representative, that the British policy of friendliness was unchanged.<sup>1</sup>

Another measure that could not fail to arouse Sikh apprehension was the passage up the Indus of fifty-six boats whose preparation had been ordered by Ellenborough. They were of no value left at the mouth of the river for they were intended to form a boat-bridge in the vicinity of Ferozepore for use in an emergency. However, writing to Broadfoot on behalf of his father, Charles Hardinge said that it was "not desirable that the purposes to which these boats can be applied should unnecessarily transpire. The Governor-General does not desire to create alarm which might be prejudicial to the Maharaja's Government." If Broadfoot was forced to give an explanation for their presence on the river he should say that the boats were needed for commissariat arrangements between Ferozepore and Sukkur, and that they were adapted for both military and trading purposes.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Foreign department to Broadfoot, 26 Feb. 1845. (Broadfoot, pp. 276-7)

<sup>2</sup>Capt. C. S. Hardinge to Broadfoot, 20 Feb. 1845. (Broadfoot, pp. 283-6)

One thing that the Sikhs regarded as being particularly indicative of any aggressive intention on the part of the British was the presence of the governor-general on the frontier and his imminent arrival there was frequently rumoured. Therefore when Hardinge did in fact set out for the frontier, at the end of September 1845, the Sikhs could not fail to be alarmed. Sensible of their fear, Hardinge told Peel that he was deliberately moving northwest at a "leisurely" pace and had instructed Gough to make no alterations in the distribution of the troops.<sup>1</sup> Broadfoot told the Lahore vakil of Hardinge's purposely slow progress, and also neatly excused the presence of additional troops on the frontier by suggesting that these troops were intended for Sind and Bareilly and by complaining of the "inconvenience suffered" by their detention at stations near the Sutlej.<sup>2</sup>

There is, however, evidence to suggest that Hardinge was in more of a hurry than he admitted. Reynell Taylor, the "Officiating Adjutant" of the Governor-General's Body-guard, wrote in mid-October that expectations were high that "something is going to be done. Sir Henry Hardinge is coming up at the rate of a hunt . . ."<sup>3</sup> But one month later Taylor felt that "some considerable change must have taken place in the views and intentions in high quarters" as the

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 23 Oct. 1845. H. P. 1

<sup>2</sup>Broadfoot to the Lahore vakil, 2 Dec. 1845. (The War in India)

<sup>3</sup>Perry, E. Gambier, Reynell Taylor, a Biography, London 1888, p. 48

governor-general had made a detour to Bharatpur. Someone in Hardinge's camp, who signed himself "M. P." when writing fifty years later of this march, observed that the governor-general was moving as fast as he could, with a much weaker escort than was usual, and that the few days rest at Bharatpur was intended to confirm the Raja's support for the British. When the governor-general's entourage and escort left the city they again pushed on by forced marches, arriving at Ambala tired and worn out.<sup>1</sup>

Hardinge was very conscious of the possibility he might be charged with provoking the Sikhs by unwarranted preparations.

Don't let Mr. Gleig<sup>2</sup> say, that the force moved up by me in 1845 was so large that it created alarm and justified aggression on the part of the Sikhs,

he wrote.

My preparations were not only made with the greatest secrecy, but the force which never fought more than 17,000 men, was not more than sufficient to give us 20,000 men for defensive purposes, leaving Garrisons in the frontier Towns and Forts in a Sikh Country extending for 150 miles in our rear, and no man will say that when the Sikh Army was known to consist of 70,000 well disciplined troops and 300 pieces of Artillery that this force was too great.

At the same time he tried to answer possible charges of his having had insufficient force at his disposal to meet a Sikh attack by implying that the outcome of the battle of Mudki

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<sup>1</sup>"M.P.," My Recollections of an Indian Battle-field in Days Gone By, H. P. iv

<sup>2</sup>Rev. G. R. Gleig, who perhaps as a result of Hardinge's refusal to nominate him as bishop of Calcutta, wrote an article critical of him in the "Quarterly Review," June 1846.

might have been very different had he "left this force as I found it in July, 1844."<sup>1</sup>

The governor-general felt that the assertion that British military preparations had given offence was unfounded. Referring to Broadfoot's report in November that the Sikh army was moving towards the frontier, he told the secret committee that the proof of his pacific intentions was to be found in the fact that "at the time these disorderly movements commenced, no additional British troops had reached our frontier stations." He claimed that the reinforcements destined for Ferozepore had not then arrived, and that those regiments that were on the march were "peaceably engaged in completing the annual reliefs."<sup>2</sup> Hardinge later stated that he had deferred making any troop movements from November 18 to December 8 so as not to give cause for alarm and to prove the sincerity of his professions; it was possible, he thought, that the Khalsa considered him to have acted thus out of weakness, although he doubted if the Durbar held such a view.<sup>3</sup>

Hardinge admitted that had the siege-train and large supplies of ammunition been moved up to the frontier early in 1845 a greater certainty of success, and a more rapid attain-

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to "Wood" (Col Thomas Wood, M.P. ?), 12 Sept. 1846. H. P.

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to the secret committee, 2 Dec. 1845. (The War in India)

<sup>3</sup>Hardinge to the secret committee, 31 Dec. 1845. (The War in India)

ment of it, would have attended British operations. "But we should have been convicted of insincerity in making pacific professions, with warlike preparations of an offensive character and justified Sikh aggression." He added that he had also incurred "much risk, and therefore am justly exposed to censure," in leaving Ambala and Meerut and the area between, with its potentially hostile population, with little protection.

According to Hardinge, the Sikh government itself did not really believe that British provocation was responsible for the war. In the lull before the last battles of the war the Rani and the chiefs made overtures to the Indian government, saying that they were ready to submit to any terms, but could not guarantee their acceptance by the Khalsa. The governor-general felt that the Durbar was still anxious to see its army destroyed. He went on: "The Sirdars frankly admit they believed in our pacific assurances and since the 18th November when Major Broadfoot wrote to the Durbar demanding explanations it has never once been pretended that they suspected our intentions."<sup>2</sup>

It was hardly likely in the tense situation that existed on the north-west frontier in 1845 that only one party should be guilty of incitement, and Sikh historians admit that their forebears were not themselves innocent of the charge of provocation, but argue that their efforts were only

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 21 March 1846. H. P. 1

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 19 Jan. 1846. H. P. 1

"pin-pricks," and not a matter of any considered policy.<sup>1</sup>

Far the most serious irritant as far as the British were concerned was a series of Sikh attempts to suborn the loyalty of the Company's sepoys. Early in 1844 Colonel John Holmes, a Eurasian officer in the Sikh army, arrested a jamadar who had tried to incite the troops to destroy a fort in the process of being built at Ferozepore. Following this incident less direct methods of undermining the British position on the frontier were resorted to by the Sikhs. In February Pandit Jalla, Hira Singh's closest adviser, urged Generals Gurdatt Singh and Gulab Singh Pohuwindia to send men to Ferozepore to induce the sepoys there to desert, and later interviewed three such deserters who told him that they came at the invitation of Sikh troops. Hira Singh, too, had ordered a number of men to enter the protected states, this time with the object of ascertaining British military resources.

In mid-March 1844 two men of the 60th Native Infantry Regiment and one of the 69th Native Infantry Regiment deserted to the Sikhs. By pretending that he was acting for Pandit Jalla, the Indian government's newswriter found out from them that the Khalsa frequently got in touch with their former regiments. When the Kasur Brigade arrived at Lahore at the end of April, its commanding officer boasted to Hira Singh that while at Kasur he had won over the sepoys at Ferozepore

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<sup>1</sup>Gupta

and arranged to seize the station; the Raja congratulated him. No opportunity was lost to induce the Company's native troops to desert or to acquire military intelligence. When the moderate sardar Lahna Singh Majithia asked Hira Singh for permission to go on pilgrimage to Hardwar in the protected states, he was told to "ascertain Everything about the British army"<sup>1</sup> and to try and find out British intentions.

Similar acts continued throughout 1844 and 1845. Considering the nature of British rule in India, such tampering with the loyalty and discipline of the sepoys constituted a grave provocation and caused the Indian government considerable alarm. It was a situation the British dared not long endure, as the Durbar must have realized.

Hardinge was very alive to the danger of the Sikhs undermining the sepoys' discipline. Although he admitted that being obliged to keep an army on the frontier and in a state of readiness was no justifiable cause for interfering in the internal affairs of a friendly state, he had no intention of allowing the contagion of Khalsa indiscipline to spread unchecked in the Indian army. The governor-general would have liked to await events, but unfortunately the insubordination and high pay of the Sikh army had become

Such a nuisance, that the only serious question which will arise is this - Is the example of an Eastern Army of 50,000 men, within 40 miles of

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<sup>1</sup>News-letters of 3 April 1844 and 29 April 1844. (Gupta, pp. 140 and 170)

our frontier, so dangerous to our power in the East as to compel us on grounds of self-preservation to disperse (it) . . . ?"<sup>1</sup>

The governor-general's anxiety on this subject is evidenced by his frequent reference to it. But the bad example of a mutinous Sikh army extorting ever-increasing rates of pay from the government it professed to serve was not his only worry. He was afraid that an appeal to religion might equally adversely affect the morale and discipline of the Hindu sepoy whose beliefs were much closer to those of the Sikhs than they were to those of their paymasters. Furthermore the financial strain of keeping an army in a condition of readiness on the frontier was severe, especially as since 1838/39 expenditure had always exceeded revenue, sometimes by a wide margin. Their awareness of these problems suggests that the British did not keep a large number of troops near the Sutlej simply in order to pounce on the Punjab at the first opportunity which presented itself.

Undoubtedly too the Sikhs had territorial ambitions, especially since the failure of the expeditions sent into Ladakh and the termination of their hopes of southward expansion after the British annexation of Sind. In a letter to Peel Hardinge referred to Gulab Singh's view that the Sikhs, confident in their strength, had been ready to profit from the disaster to the British at Kabul and by a sudden inroad into the protected states sweep away the frontier posts of

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 7 Jan. 1845. H. P. 1



Ferozepore and Ludhiana. They hoped that the Sikhs in those states would then rise and that Gwalior and Nepal would be prepared to exploit any initial success over the British.

The Durbar also hoped that the Hindoo Sepoys would if successful join them and that they would in a month be in possession of Delhi and our ordnance magazine in that town . . . If unsuccessful, the Sikh chiefs would get rid of their Army."<sup>1</sup>

Not only did the Sikhs constitute a threat to the whole basis of British rule in India, but the sardars did all in their power to initiate a war they tried their hardest to lose. "They have no hopes of re-establishing a Sikh Government and in their despair are determined to bring on British interference as the least of the evils under which they are suffering," Hardinge reported after hearing from Broadfoot of the anarchy which accompanied the closing weeks of Jawahir Singh's rule.<sup>2</sup> Their moment of success came on November 18 when final orders for the movement of the Sikh army on the frontier were issued; but the Khalsa knew too well the treachery of their leaders and refused to march unless accompanied by the sardars, with the result that the move was delayed nearly three weeks while Lal Singh and Tej Singh overcame their reluctance to go to the front.

Thus the anarchic conditions at Lahore, to which there are so many references in British despatches, owed little to the policy of the Indian government, although the

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 19 Feb. 1846. H. P. 1

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 8 Sept. 1843. H. P. 1

political agents on the frontier sometimes overstepped the limits that usually govern the relations between allies. The instability in the Punjab was largely the result of the Sikh army's entering politics. At the end of the eighteenth century a Sikh misldar, in reply to a request for military aid from the nawab vazir of Oudh, wrote: "Your Excellency knows the nature of the Sikhs without our describing it; that unless paid they never exert themselves for any one."<sup>1</sup> In the five years before they launched a full-scale invasion across the Sutlej the Khalsa became increasingly a praetorian guard, selling their support to the highest bidder.

After devoting all his energies to building a modern army, Ranjit Singh neglected to pay it regularly, and it was therefore willing to sell its services to Sher Singh in his effort to overthrow Maharani Chand Kaur, the widow of Kharak Singh, at the end of 1840. In the first six months of his rule Sher Singh gave nearly ninety-five lakhs of rupees to the troops. This blatant bribery made the army aware of its importance in the struggle for the rulership of the Punjab, and the government, or aspirants to it, was overwhelmed with demands for money, gold gifts, and medals; the Khalsa even resorted to plundering their own compatriots. By the middle of 1841 the Sikh army no longer considered itself an instrument of the government; its demands now extended beyond the

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<sup>1</sup>Bhanga Singh to the nawab vazir of Oudh, 1794. (Singh, Khushwant, A History of the Sikhs, Oxford 1965, i, 181)

question of pay to the formulation of policy.

Since all the major Sikh conquests had been made by 1822, the army, which continued rapidly to increase, could no longer maintain itself largely at the expense of its enemies. Hira Singh and Pandit Jalla were the last of the Durbar leaders to try and reduce the Khalsa to subordination. Pandit Jalla was able, through unpopular and temporary methods, to relieve the finances, but a permanent improvement needed a decrease in military expenditure or an increase in taxes, neither of which could be effected. Rani Jindan was able to turn the army against Hira Singh and towards the end of 1844 he and his mentor were chased out of Lahore and killed. The Rani's dissolute brother, Jawahir Singh, took over the vazarat.

The army gave the Rani to understand that, while it accepted her son as Maharaja for the moment, it regarded Peshora Singh as having prior claims to the throne; it was therefore an act of folly on the part of Jawahir Singh to have the troops' favourite killed, making the Khalsa's usurpation of power more certain. When the vazir realized his mistake he tried to redirect the army's wrath against the British. Early in September 1845 Broadfoot reported that Jawahir Singh was trying to suborn the Company's sepoys and had ordered his troops to be ready to cross the river. These acts, and the revival of a dispute over the town of Anandpur Makhwal, greatly exacerbated the atmosphere of

excitement and crisis.

Ironically, when the unrest in the Punjab was at its height, in mid 1845, the Sikh state showed itself surprisingly resilient. Within a few months the powerful Gulab Singh was led captive to Lahore, Diwan Mulraj was reduced to submission in the south, Peshora Singh was defeated, and the Afghans were kept in check. Had a stronger and wiser man than Jawahir Singh ruled the country the reassertion of the Sikh government's authority that Hardinge wished for might have been possible - at one point shortly before the war the governor-general hoped that Gulab Singh might be the instrument of such a regeneration.

The Khalsa's resentment against Jawahir Singh led the council of the army, after a conference lasting more than a fortnight, to decide on his deposition; the council also decided to attack Delhi.<sup>1</sup> The Rani's brother was summoned before the army on September 21 and slain, and the panchayats took over the government of the Punjab early in October. The new government apologized to the British for Jawahir Singh's excesses, and tried to rectify some of the Indian government's complaints. But the Khalsa itself was now split, and one faction, with the Rani's encouragement, was demanding to be led to Ferozepore.

The revolutionary situation at Lahore was constantly on Hardinge's mind, and from the time of Hira Singh's death

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<sup>1</sup>Gardner, Alexander, Soldier and Traveller, London & Edinburgh 1898, pp. 258-9

his letters, as well as those of his son, made frequent reference to it. In January 1845, for instance, Charles Hardinge wrote:

How long this state of anarchy can exist, it is impossible to say; if they fail in patching up a Government among themselves, we must interfere and establish one ourselves - but as the matter stands, although we have recognized Dhuleep Singh as Maharajah, we are not bound by treaty to interfere, unless any encroachment or attack is made upon our boundary. The Government here are determined to carry on a pacific line of policy, unless circumstances should occur to render any interference justifiable.<sup>1</sup>

The governor-general was anxious that his moderation should not be mistaken for hesitancy. "Our moderation misleads (Jawahir Singh) - our forbearance is considered timidity, arising from Orders received from England, not to touch the Punjab . . . A few letters, speaking the truth plainly, will set this delusion right."<sup>2</sup> He was afraid that the unstable condition of the Punjab would enable the Afghans to occupy Peshawar - the city had been offered them by Peshora Singh - an eventuality that would prove very serious for the British, in his view; "but forbearance shall be exhausted, and if we are compelled to move, I am determined to have an undeniable, strong, and prominent case."<sup>3</sup>

Despite his fears he had no intention of being the dupe of the sardars' ambitions. He understood that some of

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<sup>1</sup>Capt. C. S. Hardinge to Sir Walter James, 20 Jan. 1845. H. P.

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Sir Walter James, 18 Aug. 1845. H. P.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid

the leading men in the Sikh government were prepared to submit to the presence of a Resident and a subsidiary force in the Punjab if such a system, similar to the one obtaining in Gwalior, entailed the Khalsa's defeat. He would not permit "the hire of a British army to disperse a mutinous Sikh army . . . "<sup>1</sup> - as has been seen he would only invade the Punjab if British interests required it, and he would do it on his own terms.

To an extent Hardinge's pacific policy was governed by a concern for appearances - if he was forced to intervene in the Punjab he intended to have "a case which will satisfy Europe that conciliation and forbearance had been exhausted"<sup>2</sup> - but the whole tenor of his papers bears out his claim that he would prefer a strong Sikh state to having to enter his ally's territory. "I detest on Military and Political principles, extending our frontier to the Indus, differing entirely with Lord Ellenboro' - and being satisfied that our present Frontier is a more desirable arrangement."<sup>3</sup> Therefore he viewed the unsettled state of the Punjab with apprehension, although he felt that Sikh rule in the Punjab being that of a minority, British intervention would only be immoral insofar as it exchanged an altogether alien ruling class for a naturalized one.

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Broadfoot, 11 Sept. 1845. (Broadfoot, p. 337)

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Sir Walter James, 30 Sept. 1845. H. P.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

Although Hardinge's despatches throughout 1845 constantly referred to the worsening situation at Lahore and pointed out the dangers to the British posed by a continued deterioration, he hoped to the last that, for the present at least, war might possibly be averted. It may be that these hopes, which were more sanguine than those held by many Indian officials, played a large part in Hardinge's adoption of a wait-and-see policy. However, he by no means discounted the possibility of an Anglo-Sikh war erupting in the near future, and if his hope that peace would be maintained in the short term had any adverse effect on his preparations for a war, it was a marginal one.

At the beginning of the year in which Anglo-Sikh relations went from crisis to war, Hardinge told Ellenborough that the biggest danger facing the British was the bad example set by the successful state of mutiny of the Sikh army; "but I anticipate no immediate necessity for interference."<sup>1</sup> The governor-general hoped that the Indian government's support for Dhalip Singh would hold matters together long enough for the rains to set in and make operations impossible for five or six months. In mid-March he told his wife that "we shall have no warlike operations in the Punjab this season - and six months hence not the wisest Man in the East can say what may happen."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Ellenborough, 8 Jan. 1845. (Broadfoot, p. 249)

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Lady Hardinge, 21 Mar. 1845. H. P.

On September 6 Hardinge wrote to the secret committee giving it as his opinion that an improvement in the state of the Punjab was "almost hopeless."<sup>1</sup> However, a fortnight later he decided that there was no immediate danger of an attack on, or violation of, British territory. But whenever he made avowals of this sort the possibility of his policy being misunderstood by the Durbar remained on his mind, so that he added in a later despatch that

Every military precaution has, however, been taken; advice and warnings have been repeatedly conveyed to the Lahore Government in the plainest language, rather than fail in the essential point of clearly defining the nature of our policy, and having that policy well understood . . .<sup>2</sup>

He intended to continue his policy of endeavouring by "moderation, good faith and friendly advice" to avert the necessity for armed British intervention in the Punjab, while omitting no precautions and being prepared for anything.

By November the government could no longer rely on the weather to defer hostilities, and the Punjab was more anarchic than ever, but Hardinge remained cautiously optimistic: "I think I shall keep the Peace this Season."<sup>3</sup> On November 19 he wrote that "at this moment our affairs in the Punjab promise to be peaceable for the next month, and

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to the Secret Committee, 9 Sept. 1845. (Broadfoot, p. 321)

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to the Secret Committee, 30 Sept. 1845. (British Sessional Papers, 1846, xxxi, 170)

<sup>3</sup>Hardinge to Lady James, 4/5 Nov. 1845. H. P.



that is something gained."<sup>1</sup> He added that a strong native government in the Punjab was in the best interest of India and that, although he despaired of ever seeing it achieved, he would continue to be patient with the Sikhs "so long as forbearance is a duty." Continued reiteration of his hopes that peace could be preserved may have been a sign that Hardinge was trying hard to convince himself that the nearly impossible was in fact possible.

If anything, as the clash drew nearer, Hardinge's hopes of averting it seem to have increased. When Broadfoot produced a contingency plan for dealing with the Punjab on the supposition that such governmental stability as there was there would soon disappear, the governor-general challenged the premise: "I don't think that point conclusively settled by any means."<sup>2</sup> On November 20 Broadfoot reported that a large Sikh force was ready to move on the Sutlej, but within three hours of the receipt of this despatch a second arrived with the news that the Khalsa had become more discreet. Hardinge was as baffled as anyone. First the Sikh government spurred on its troops to fight the English, and they refused; then it was the turn of the officers and the panchayats to be restrained by the Durbar. "No man can calculate on barbarian caprices; my own convictions are, however, very decided

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Sir Walter James, 19 Nov. 1845. H. P.

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 8 Sept. 1845. H. P. 1

that no attempt will be made."<sup>1</sup>

After consultations with Gough in late November Hardinge postponed making any change in the current distribution of the troops; "At the present moment his Excellency coincides with me that no forward movement is required."<sup>2</sup> The governor-general also had no intention of using any Sikh movement on the frontier as justification for opening hostilities, provided no actual violation of the frontier should occur: "The same privilege which we take to adopt precautionary measures on our side must be conceded to them."<sup>3</sup> Although early in December he was still strongly convinced that the Sikh army would be deterred from acts of aggression, Hardinge felt that it was "by no means impossible" that war might at any moment be forced upon him, and "For this alternative I have made all preparations."<sup>4</sup>

Only one week before the Sikhs began to cross the river into the protected states Hardinge did not expect that any positive acts of aggression would be committed by them, although he observed that the Rani and the sardars were trying to raise a storm which, when it reached full force, they would be powerless to direct or to allay.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless he

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Broadfoot, 22 Nov. 1845. (Broadfoot, p. 369)

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to the Secret Committee, 2 Dec. 1845. (The War in India)

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid

<sup>5</sup>Hardinge to the Secret Committee, 4 Dec. 1845. (The War in India)

seems to have increased his precautions for Gough told him that "The force shall be all closed up as you wish . . ."<sup>1</sup> The commander-in-chief himself believed until the eleventh hour that nothing larger than "plundering" raids could be expected of the Sikhs.

Although hope persisted to the last in Indian government circles that the war might be at least deferred, the events in the Punjab during the autumn led inevitably to the climax. At about the end of August Broadfoot warned that the Sikh army, scared into frantic preparation by the belligerence of the Indian press, would by the winter be more efficient in matériel than it had been for years. Though the army was still dispersed and could not yet be regarded as hostile these preparations were "undoubtedly made with reference to a possible collision with us."<sup>2</sup>

Shortly after Jawahir Singh's death the brigade that had been responsible for it started clamouring to be led against the English, and as the Punjab rapidly approached insolvency it looked increasingly as if their wish would have to be granted. Early in November it was reported that Lahore had sent zamindars into Sirsa province, an area under Company protection, and it was understood that a large force was assembling, under no control, to take possession of it.

Impatient to be led against the English, the Khalsa consulted the astrologers on November 17 but did not receive a

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge, C. S., p. 80

<sup>2</sup>Broadfoot, p. 318

satisfactory answer, whereupon they demanded that another and early date for an invasion be found. However, despite the unfavourable omens, that night marching orders were sent out and the army was divided into seven divisions, five of which were to be distributed between posts near the frontier. On November 29 Captain Nicolson reported that a large number of Sikhs were on the march, with the intention of fighting - they had been told the sepoys would not oppose them.<sup>1</sup> On December 2 the governor-general sent the more important parts of Broadfoot's correspondence to England, and in his covering letter remarked that the Sikh army had moved twelve miles from Lahore in the direction of the frontier. Two days later it was reported quietly moving on Harike and Ferozepore.

Even at this late stage, and despite the loss of the moderate counsels of Faqir Aziz-ud-din, who died on December 2, there were still members of the Durbar who tried to prevent an invasion of British India. "The British authorities have not acted contrary to any agreement," Gulab Singh wrote to the council of regency. "Neither have they broken their word. So to fight them without any reason is wrong . . . do not interfere in the affairs of the British."<sup>2</sup>

On December 3 Broadfoot interviewed the Sikh wakil regarding the Durbar's failure to explain the orders it gave to its troops to march on the frontier and to reply to a complaint

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<sup>1</sup>Broadfoot, p. 357

<sup>2</sup>Pannikar, K. M., The Founding of the Kashmir State, London 1953, p. 91

made on the subject by the agent. The vakil was told to leave the British camp until the long-awaited answer to Broadfoot's complaint arrived. Doubts, or delusions, still persisted among the British as to Sikh intentions. Hardinge wrote that up to December 7 and 8 "no infantry or artillery had been reported to have left Lahore,"<sup>1</sup> a surprising statement in view of a comment by his son on December 4 to the effect that "this morning it was reported that the artillery had advanced from Lahore 40 miles towards the Frontier."<sup>2</sup>

There is some dispute as to the date of the Sikhs' crossing of the Sutlej. According to Nicolson's diary, under the date of December 8, they were then camped three miles from the river and planned to cross "on Thursday," which was December 10. Captain Saunders Abbott, who was with the governor-general's camp, said that Broadfoot received word of the Sikh crossing either during the night of December 9 or early on the following morning. "We then went to the Governor-General's camp, and met Sir Henry and his Staff just mounting to move to the next camping ground at Sirhind. Broadfoot reported the news, and after a short conference the war offered by the Sikhs was accepted."<sup>3</sup> Thus Hardinge would have heard the news at Patarsi on December 10, according to Broadfoot, who had been with his camp since November 26. Charles Hardinge

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to the Secret Committee, 31 Dec. 1845. (The War in India)

<sup>2</sup>Capt. C. S. Hardinge to Sir Walter James, 4 Dec. 1845. H. P.

<sup>3</sup>Broadfoot, p. 377

claimed that his father received the news on December 12; the governor-general would at that time have been at Lashkar-Khan-ki-serai, which was nearly one hundred miles from Ferozepore.

According to Sir Henry Hardinge the reports he received on December 12 showed that though the general aspect of affairs appeared more warlike, "no Sikh aggression had been committed, and no artillery had moved down to the river." He added that it was on December 13 that he first received "precise information" that the Sikh army had crossed the Sutlej and was concentrating in force on the left bank.<sup>1</sup> This account of the timing of the invasion coincides nearly enough with that of Kohli, whose claim that the embarkation of men and matériel began on December 13 was based on the report written by Diwan Ajodhia Nath very shortly after the war. On that day, too, Hardinge issued a proclamation that was tantamount to a declaration of war.

The governor-general abandoned the pacific policy he had hitherto followed with reluctance and trepidation. Even after the Sikhs had crossed the Sutlej in force he wondered whether he was justified in treating the crossing as a full-scale invasion. Robert Cust noted in his journal for December 18 that while sitting under a tree awaiting the arrival of the infantry, Hardinge asked: "Will the people of England

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to the Secret Committee, 31 Dec. 1845. (The War in India)

consider this an actual invasion of our frontier and a justification of war?"<sup>1</sup>

During 1845 Hardinge had no other policy with regard to the Punjab than simply to watch the Sikh state disintegrate under the weight of its own internal dissensions and to prepare the Company's forces to meet the final upheaval. Since he had no intention of intervening in the affairs of a sovereign nation there was little else he could do but wait - and hope for a reversal in the trend towards anarchy at Lahore. Insofar as a policy that could be actively implemented by its proponent only through recourse to war has any value, the one adopted by Hardinge provided a useful yardstick for his actions both before and, particularly, after the war. The main postulate behind this policy was that the government of the Punjab ought, in the Company's interests, either to be a strong Sikh one or else be British: "the Punjab to be safe must either be occupied by a Sikh Army acting under a Sikh Dynasty or by a British force acting under the British Government."<sup>2</sup> Consequently, if the moral support he offered the Maharaja's government should prove inadequate to sustain it, and the Khalsa were to attack British India and be defeated, the governor-general intended to visit on them the "unlimited consequences" of their aggression, by which he meant full British occupation.

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<sup>1</sup>Singh, Ganda, Private Correspondence relating to the Anglo Sikh Wars, Patiala and Amritsar 1955, p. 89

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 8 Sept. 1845, H. P. 1

In the upshot these "unlimited consequences" did not follow the Sikh defeat in 1846, but Hardinge remained true to his policy in his efforts to re-establish, under British tutelage, a strong Sikh government in the Punjab after the war.



### III. THE CONTENDING FORCES

A colonial governor taking office in a territory with which he has had no previous acquaintance is to a large degree dependent on the advice of subordinate officials of long residence. Nowhere was this more apparent than in India at the period in question. Unfortunately the old school of Company servants, men like Mountstuart Elphinstone and Charles Metcalfe, with their deep and generous understanding of the Indian character, were being replaced by men whose political and military experience was learned outside the country they ruled and who were less adaptable than the earlier type of official. Major Broadfoot, upon whom Hardinge had to lean heavily, could not, for instance, be compared with Clerk, whom Ellenborough considered the greatest living authority on the Sikhs. Furthermore he was appointed agent on the north-west frontier only thirteen months before the outbreak of hostilities, and was assisted by relatively young and inexperienced officers. Yet Hardinge's whole policy with regard to the Punjab depended on the information supplied him by these men since he himself had no experience of the Sikhs or of their country.

The opinion was widespread that the British intelligence system in India was "defective," as Major-General Sir

Harry Smith put it, and many of its critics were quick to lay the blame at the door of the political officers. Since the Afghan war the "politicals" had not been held in high regard, and were especially criticized by the military community; this must have been humiliating to them for they were often soldiers themselves, seconded from their regiments on the basis of merit. Their reaction to military criticism proved a further obstacle to the collection of information, for when Gough sent some officers to try to find out more precise details of the numbers and composition of the Sikh army than he had been given, they were obstructed by the political officers who "took great pains to thwart them."<sup>1</sup> The politicals further weakened their credibility when, as war approached, their reports became confused and even contradictory.

Actually very little that occurred in the Punjab went unnoticed in the political agency at Ambala - even Jawahir Singh's debauches were reported at length. There were a number of British news-writers at Lahore, and these attended the Durbar openly until Hira Singh refused to permit their continued presence there. If anything escaped the news-writers a courtier might be expected to supply the necessary information, sometimes of a highly confidential nature, so as to curry favour with the British. Bhai Ram Singh, for example, passed secrets on to the agent at Ludhiana. Carmichael Smyth referred to the activities of "Captain Gardner of the Seik

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<sup>1</sup>Fortescue, Hon. Sir John W., The Last Post, London and Edinburgh 1934, p. 142.

Artillery, who has for several years past supplied important information to the British Government . . ."<sup>1</sup>

The news-writers' almost daily reports were sent to Ludhiana and thence to Broadfoot at Ambala where, after being translated (for the majority were in Persian), they were condensed and transmitted to the secretary to the government. It was Broadfoot's job to analyse the information that was received from Lahore, and he was technically well qualified for it. His knowledge of Indian languages was good and, not requiring an interpreter, he could receive natives alone, thus enabling them the more readily to pass on information. Hardinge was not sure if Broadfoot did not attach undue importance to certain reports, but great reliance had to be placed on the judgement of a man stationed more than one thousand miles from Calcutta when the post travelled at no more than four miles per hour.

Despite there being a great deal of information available to him, Hardinge complained to Peel that when the home authorities received Broadfoot's reports, they knew almost as much as did the Indian government.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, alert and well-informed as were the news-writers, they were inclined to tell their masters what they thought they wanted to hear. Thus the information received by Hardinge was covered with several layers of interpretation - by the Sikhs themselves, by the

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<sup>1</sup> Smyth, Carmichael, History of the Reigning Family of Lahore, Calcutta 1847, p. xvii; cited Gupta, p. xxiv. Colonel Alexander Gardner, an artilleryman in Gulab Singh's pay, if the man referred to by Smyth, makes no mention in his autobiography of having a second paymaster.

<sup>2</sup> Hardinge to Peel, 23 Oct. 1845. H. P. 1.

news-writers, and by the politicals - before it reached him. Nonetheless the governor-general retained enough confidence in his intelligence system to be able to tell General Sir Charles Napier only a fortnight before the war that he would give him six weeks' notice of hostilities.

In one field in particular the information available to the governor-general was so contradictory as to cause him seriously to underestimate the fighting value of the Sikh army. Official British interest in the Sikh army was not very apparent before September 1843 when reports on its strength and dispositions first began to appear in the "India Secret Proceedings." As if to make up for lost ground the government had Cunningham draw up early in 1844 a detailed "Narrative of the Military Resources and the Political Conditions in the Punjab." Of course professional interest in the Sikh army considerably pre-dated official interest, but as Captain William Osborne, Auckland's military secretary, observed,

The reports from different persons on the efficiency of the Sikh army, who have been witnesses to its conduct in action vary so much, that it is difficult to come at the real truth.<sup>1</sup>

The Sikh army owed its origin to Guru Gobind Singh who in 1699 created a casteless fraternity of the pure, the Khalsa. During the eighteenth century the Khalsa were mostly horsemen, employing as their main tactic "dhai phut," or hit-and-run, raids. At the end of the century the Afghan threat brought into prominence a young chief, Ranjit Singh,

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<sup>1</sup>Edwardes, Michael, The Necessary Hell, London 1958, p. 104.

who first realized the value of infantry and of discipline. The Sikh predilection for cavalry was not easily overcome, but the arrival of European mercenaries at Lahore after 1822 resulted in a rapid increase in both the size and importance of the infantry and artillery arms of the service. By 1845 fifty-two out of the sixty-two regular infantry battalions were largely composed of Sikhs where previously the foot-soldiers had been drawn mostly from Hindustanis, Muslims, and Gurkhas.

The order of battle was much the same as that of the Company army, with battalions organized into brigades containing besides infantry a fixed proportion of artillery, of cavalry, and of such ancillary services as there were. The principal infantry weapon was, as in the Company's service, the "Brown Bess," although at the time of his death Ranjit Singh was attempting to replace the old flintlock with percussion muskets. The Sikhs rarely employed the bayonet and greatly feared its use by their enemies. With regard to the artillery most of the guns were quite as good as those belonging to the Company and were usually of a heavier calibre. The powder the Sikh gunners used was, however, generally felt to be inferior to that used by the British. Lieutenant-Colonel Steinbach noted that the horses bred in the Punjab were far from good, and since the Sikhs did not import stock the irregulars were all wretchedly mounted," and, indeed, little can be said even of the regular cavalry in this respect."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Steinbach, Lt-Col. H., The Punjaub; Being a Brief Account of the Country of the Sikhs. London 1845, p. 59.

The arrival in the Punjab in 1822 of the former Napoleonic officers, Allard and Ventura, resulted in the Sikh army being trained largely along French lines. The training was founded on the "Zafarnama," a translation into Persian of a French pamphlet containing instruction in drill, weapon training, and evolutions. But for all their relatively modern training, the Sikhs were slow in manoeuvring, which partially accounts for their preference for defensive fighting when opposed to the better-drilled British troops.

In the unrest that followed Ranjit Singh's death the standard of training and the discipline of the Sikh army deteriorated, partly due to a decline in the quality and morale of the native officers and the gradual disappearance of the Europeans. During this period the panchayats, who were elected by the troops at all levels right down to the company, rose to a pre-eminent position in the Punjab. They left the oversight of regimental duties to the officers but controlled the army's relations with the state, particularly with regard to matters of pay and policy.

As a result of Ranjit Singh's failure adequately to pay his troops they were often a year or more in arrears, and this seriously affected discipline as increasingly the army's services were sold to the highest bidder. In January 1844 several hundred men stationed on the road to Kasur left their regiments saying "they would do their duty as they pleased."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Gupta, pp. xcv and 24

Towards the end of September ten thousand troops who had gone on leave suddenly turned up to plunder Lahore, Amritsar, and Jammu.<sup>1</sup>

Such behaviour tempted even experienced British observers into assuming that the European training given the Sikh army was nothing more than an impressive façade behind which sheltered the usual failings of an Indian army. "I think," Henry Lawrence wrote,

that (the new discipline) is all fudge, well enough to look at and for display, but useless beyond this; the Sikhs have never used it yet and never will and if ever they are induced to charge, it will be in a tumultuary manner and the straight parade line system will be entirely forgotten or despised in the hour of action . . . But it has had one good effect, it has called attention to the state of the army, their arms and physical appearance.<sup>2</sup>

But it was easy to exaggerate, as the British frequently did, the extent of the decline in quality of the Sikh army throughout the turbulent years that preceded the war. During this period the army was greatly increased both in numbers and in matériel, yet the quality of its equipment remained fairly good. The Panchayat system, whatever its effect on the army's discipline in time of peace, contributed much towards the high morale of the men by enabling them to regard the army as the embodiment of the Sikh people. Furthermore in the field the panchayats laid aside their assumed

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid, pp. xcvi and 312

<sup>2</sup>Bajwa, F. S., Military System of the Sikhs during the Period 1799-1849, Delhi 1964, p. 147

control and accepted a purely military organization, generally obeying their officers.

British observers, noting the part played by the Khalsa in the upheavals in the Punjab, too readily believed that the Sikh army had lost much of its effectiveness as a fighting force. Cunningham wrote that the British were confident that steady marching and a few rounds of artillery, rather than skilful tactics and hard fighting, would win the war. "We began the campaign as we have begun every campaign in India, before and since, by despising our foes . . ." John Lawrence claimed.<sup>1</sup> The Reverend Coley, who joined the army at Ambala one week before the outbreak of hostilities, noted that the general expectation was that the Sikhs would "not give us much trouble, nor keep their ground long, and will soon have cause to repent of their folly."<sup>2</sup>

Hardinge was one of the many who gravely underestimated the efficacy of the Sikh army. In October 1845 he informed the secret committee that

The regular force at Lahore, on the 12th September, does not amount to 15,000 men . . . Assuming that the Sikh troops are desirous of being led against the English, an assumption more than doubtful, their present state of inefficiency is too palpable to encourage them to undertake such a risk at the bidding and under the command of a minister who at this moment is an object of their hatred and contempt . . .<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Smith, R. Bosworth, Life of Lord Lawrence, London 1883, 1, p. 213

<sup>2</sup>Coley, James, Journal of the Sutlej Campaign of 1845-6, London 1856, p. 7

<sup>3</sup>Hardinge to the secret committee, 1 Oct. 1845. (British Sessional Papers, 1846, Vol. xxxi, p. 170, No. 5) The British were rather better informed on the strength of the Sikh army than they were on its quality, although they tended to exag-



In front of his own officers Hardinge seems to have shown even fewer reservations regarding Sikh strength than he did in his reports to the home authorities. "Hardinge says we shall easily beat them," Sir Charles Napier wrote, "and he probably has good information from the wise men of the East."<sup>1</sup>

These mistaken impressions owed much to the views of the governor-general's political agents who were generally more critical of the Sikh army than were their military colleagues. Broadfoot's contention that the Khalsa were a "rabble," and daily deteriorating further, was at variance not only with the truth but also with the opinions of experienced but less influential British officers. Even Henry Lawrence tempered his praise for the fighting qualities of the Sikhs with criticism of their discipline, their leadership, and their artillery. Of the higher ranking politicals probably only Colonel Richmond recognized that behind the Khalsa's insubordinate behaviour were concealed formidable martial abilities and a willingness to dare and to endure much for the sake of their race and religion.

It is difficult to determine how far the governor-general's mistaken analysis of the fighting value of the Sikh army affected his own preparations for the war. However it is evident that after Mudki his realization of the high quality of the Sikh troops resulted in his adopting a more

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gerate it somewhat. In fact the regular army numbered approximately 70,000 men in 1845, while the irregulars had a strength of about 30,000, most of which was cavalry.

<sup>1</sup> Bruce, W. N., Life of General Sir Charles Napier, G. C. B., London 1885, pp. 326-7.

cautious approach to the remaining battles than he had shown at the outset of the campaign. His earlier and defective analysis of the enemy was forgotten when after the war Hardinge described the Sikh army as "a well-appointed and well-drilled army, inferior to none in Asia for its courage and national pride and superior to every other native army except our own from its European system of discipline."<sup>1</sup>

If the illusions widely held regarding the Sikh army could be attributed to their limited knowledge of the Punjab, there was less excuse for the faulty analysis that the British authorities made concerning the state of the Bengal army. The principal weaknesses of the latter army were known, but very few people recognized the extent to which they permeated it.

The Bengal army appeared imposing enough. In 1845 the regular force, European and native, comprised 86,406 infantry, 5,358 cavalry, 8,196 artillerists, and 1,482 engineers and sappers and miners. Supporting this force were ten British infantry regiments, with a strength of 9,840 all ranks, and three cavalry regiments numbering 1,922 all ranks. The sepoys were smartly turned out, wearing the same dress as their British comrades, except for sandals and turbans. Furthermore the men were potentially good military material; the great majority of the sepoys in the Bengal army came from Oudh, and Lieutenant-Colonel Sleeman remarked of them that "finer young men for

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<sup>1</sup>Minute by Hardinge 11 Nov. 1846 (Baillie, pp. 104-5)

soldiers can hardly anywhere be found than Oudh."<sup>1</sup>

But behind the imposing façade of a large, well-drilled, and smartly turned-out army there was an increasing demoralization and a declining loyalty towards the Company. Among long-serving Company officers and veteran sepoy like Subadar Sita Ram Pande there was a nostalgia for the great days of Wellesley, of Lake, and of Combermere. Then, according to Sita Ram, the British officers had treated their men like children, and the sepoy had responded with an often astonishing degree of devotion.

Gradually, however, the officers lost touch with the men under their command and it came to the point where they would only speak to them when obliged to do so. This was one reason for the estrangement of officers and men, but the main one was the acute shortage of the former.

We are very much pressed for officers of infantry, artillery and engineers, and we have not enough medical officers,

Ellenborough told Wellington in June 1844.

Where we are to find the money to pay them I hardly know, but we must have them, as all would go without an efficient army.<sup>2</sup>

Frequently almost half the twenty-three European officers nominally on the rolls of a native infantry regiment might be absent on staff or departmental duties, in civil or political

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<sup>1</sup>Sleeman, Lt-Col. W. H., Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official, London 1844, ii, p. 86.

<sup>2</sup>Ellenborough to Wellington, 9 June 1844 (Colchester, pp. 444-5)

employ, on attachment to irregular units or on leave. Those that remained were often either inexperienced young subalterns or older men embittered by the feeling of belonging to a minority who could obtain nothing better. The "Bengal Harkaru" of 25 June 1845 observed that

Very many regiments have not even one European officer at the head of each company on parade . . . we have known the whole ten companies held by three officers for six months at a time, on account of the absence of all other qualified officers.<sup>1</sup>

In 1845 the establishment of European officers in the Bengal native infantry was 1,776; the actual strength was 1,694, but out of this last figure must be deducted the 455 officers on staff and civilian duties and the 170 on furlough.<sup>2</sup> Ensign Hodson provided an example of the unpopularity of regimental duties among ambitious young subalterns. Between November 1845 and June 1846 he received four postings - to the 2nd Grenadiers, the 16th Grenadiers, the 26th Native Infantry, and finally, and more lastingly, to the 1st Bengal European Regiment; but even whilst on the rolls of this last unit Hodson spent most of his time on political work.

The frequent posting of officers showed a lack of imagination on the part of the government and of army headquarters. Indian troops needed understanding and a long acquaintance with their officers to keep up their discipline and morale. To compound the problems posed by the absence of so many officers, those that remained

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<sup>1</sup>Barat, Dr. Amiya, The Bengal Native Infantry; its organisation and discipline, 1796-1852, Calcutta 1962, p. 108

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, Appendix C, p. 308

exhibited little interest in their regimental duties and turned instead to beer and billiards and their clubs. They became entirely alienated from their men and betray signs of greatest impatience while they listen to the necessary reports of their native officers.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, they were often unable to speak their men's language - Auckland noted in 1841 that of 370 Ensigns scarcely ten had passed an examination in the native languages.

The status of the native officers was particularly anomalous. They had had their dignity and authority undermined by the large-scale Europeanisation of the officer corps in 1796 and 1824 and by the time of the Sikh wars occupied an uneasy position between the European officers and the sepoys. They had taken all their lives to rise from the ranks and their main concern was with ensuring that they received their pensions. They were old and largely unequal to campaigning, and their baggage became a burden on their regiment's marching establishment.

Alongside the deterioration in leadership was a decline in discipline. A General Order of March 1827 abolished corporal punishment for sepoys except in cases of stealing, marauding, or gross insubordination. In 1835 the abolition became total. As a result of this Sita Ram complained, "The Army had ceased to fear" and no sepoy worried about the possibility of a court martial.<sup>2</sup> The Subedar thought that the failure on the part of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid, p. 114. Barat's reference is incorrect.

<sup>2</sup>Sita Ram Pande, From Sepoy to Subedar (ed. Lunt, James), London 1970, p. 75

the high command adequately to support commanding officers, the reluctance to punish the men when punishment was essential, and the undue attention that was paid to the sepoy's susceptibilities, had all sapped morale.

The declension in discipline and morale was greatly assisted by the destruction in 1842 of the force left at Kabul. Wellington's warning that the Kabul disaster would adversely affect the native troops, particularly the Muslims,<sup>1</sup> was brushed aside by Ellenborough who felt that not only would the army soon be "sufficiently strong for any purpose" but also that its spirit was much improved.<sup>2</sup> The sepoy, however, had not forgotten what had happened to his hitherto invincible English comrades. "After the Kabul war and the campaign in Sind most of the Sirkar's<sup>3</sup> regiments between Delhi and Ferozepore were ripe for mutiny," Sita Ram claimed, "and it was only the incredible good luck of the Sirkar that prevented a general uprising."<sup>4</sup> Less than five months before Hardinge arrived in India some of the native regiments at Ferozepore had refused to march to Sind, on the alleged grounds that allowances to troops in that province had been cut. Although Ellenborough described the affair as a "mutiny" the recalcitrant troops were treated leniently, but the disquiet felt in official

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<sup>1</sup>Wellington to Ellenborough, 30 Mar. 1842 (Colchester, p. 230)

<sup>2</sup>Ellenborough to Wellington, 7 June 1842 (Colchester, p. 250)

<sup>3</sup>Government

<sup>4</sup>Sita Ram Pande, p. 125

circles at this incident in part lay behind Hardinge's re-introduction of corporal punishment.

As has been noted the sepoys had been animated in the early nineteenth century by higher feelings than the merely mercenary (an instance of this was the deep attachment to their colours displayed by a Rajput battalion at the two sieges of Bharatpur<sup>1</sup>). But by 1845 the governor-general could speak of there being "no feeling of loyalty or National sympathy, or of personal attachment to aliens and Feringhees,<sup>2</sup> between the British officer, the Hindoo, or the Mussulman."<sup>3</sup> Hardinge felt that without the pension system the Company's hold over its vast army of mercenaries would be extremely tenuous, especially since the basic pay of the Indian army was considerably lower than that of the Sikh army. Nonetheless he told the secret committee just before the war that he had "no cause to doubt the loyalty of our admirable native army . . ."<sup>4</sup> The "sudden prostration of spirit" evinced by the sepoys at Ferozeshah therefore came as a complete surprise to him.<sup>5</sup>

Quite apart from questions of morale and discipline

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<sup>1</sup>Cf., Woodruff, Philip, The Men Who Ruled India, London 1963, 1, p. 346.

<sup>2</sup>Europeans

<sup>3</sup>Hardinge to Sir James Graham (?), spring 1845, H. P. 1

<sup>4</sup>Hardinge to the secret committee, 2 Dec. 1845. (The War in India)

<sup>5</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 21 Mar. 1846. H. P. 1

the army was not really suited to the task of fighting a protracted and closely-contested campaign. Shortly after the subjugation of Gwalior Sir Harry Smith listed the defects of the Indian army:

its appalling quantity of baggage, its lack of organization and equipment of the soldiers, its want of experience in Generals and in officers, the extreme willingness but total inexpertness and inaptitude of the soldiers in the arts of war, in the conflict, on picquet, on every duty which a protracted campaign alone can teach effectually. In this country almost every war has been terminated in one or two pitched battles fought so soon as the one army comes in sight of the other, and accordingly all the science attaching to advance and retreat, the posting of picquets, reconnaissance of the enemy, the daily contemplating his movements, both when he is before you and on the march, are lost, and war is reduced at once to 'there are people drawn up who will shoot at you, so fire away at them' . . . Thus we must judiciously and with foresight organize ourselves for a campaign in the Punjaub - a very probable event - for the armies of India are not now the rabble they were in Clive's time . . . thus by superior ability we could alone calculate on their defeat.<sup>1</sup>

The cavalry, both regular and irregular, was generally considered to be well-officered and well-mounted, but the regulars were forced to use the European saddle and long stirrups and the British regulation sword to which they were not accustomed. The irregular cavalry was an arm popular amongst the native gentry and yeomanry, and these men were well suited to the duties of light cavalry, such as outpost work, reconnaissance, and foraging, and they were good skirmishers. Yet there were notable instances where the cavalry failed in its role as the eyes of the army, among them being the battles of

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<sup>1</sup>Smith, Sir Harry, Autobiography of Sir Harry Smith, London 1902, ii, p. 136.



Maharajpur, Mudki, and Baddowal.

In the artillery the interests and usefulness of the foot artillery were subordinated to those of the mounted branch. It was so short of officers that untrained ones often saw service in command of a company, and the rapid turn-over of officers in this arm undermined the morale and efficiency of the men. But even the prestigious horse artillery, which Prince Waldemar of Prussia regarded as being the finest in the world, was bedevilled by shortages, particularly of animals. Since some horses ordered from Australia were not available until after the war most of the light field batteries were bullock-drawn, and therefore less mobile. Draught-horses were not easily obtained and Persia, Afghanistan, and the Cape were scoured for them. As a result of the lack of horses many of the horse artillery guns were light 6-pounders, although some troops did change to 9-pounders for the campaign.

The engineers were too much used in civil employ; barrack-building and repairing and account-keeping were not the best training for a campaign. The sappers were largely officered by young subaltern engineers and, according to Henry Lawrence, were being used as coolies. The lack of trained subordinates, together with shortages of funds, transport, and materials, resulted in delays in the construction of the permanent, metalled Grand Trunk road, so that it only reached Karnal in 1855. Furthermore there were few bridges and roads in the plains west of the Jumna.

From a military point of view this state of things had even its advantages,

one experienced Indian army officer later wrote.

The want of roads taught Indian armies how to do without them. The whole system of military transport and supply being necessarily adapted to a roadless country, the ordinary requirements under this head during peace differed in no material degree from the requirements of a time of war. All the subsidiary military establishments were framed on a scale and plan to admit of the troops moving readily across country in any direction; and when regiments were transferred from one station to another in ordinary course of relief, they took the field just as completely as if they were about to enter on a campaign . . .<sup>1</sup>

While the above analysis is accurate with respect to the small-scale campaigns in which the Indian army was frequently involved, a full-scale war, such as that fought against the Sikhs, made logistic demands that could not be met by peace-time establishments, as Hardinge's preparations showed. The commissariat department had therefore to be prepared rapidly and substantially to increase regimental and station marching establishments. Unfortunately, Henry Lawrence complained in an article on the "Military Defence of our Indian Empire," the European officers in that department exercised very little control over their subordinates and there was also a good deal of graft involved in its operation.

In peace-time a certain amount of transport was kept up at each station for immediate use, but when a war was in the offing the civil authorities had to collect transport

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<sup>1</sup>Chesney, Gen. Sir George, Indian Polity, London 1894, pp. 274-5

animals on a large scale, which made secrecy of preparation very difficult. The limited budget within which they had to work also added to the problems faced by the commissary officers. In the upshot the commissariat proved unable adequately to meet the needs of the army as it concentrated to repel the Sikh invasion and Hardinge was forced to call upon Broadfoot to remedy the deficiency of supplies and transport. The political agent rose to the challenge but in doing so used crude and ad hoc methods that would not have been permitted to the commissariat.

Lawrence's article also pointed out the lack of an adequate staff,<sup>1</sup> a defect that made the Bengal army a clumsier weapon in the hands of Hardinge and Gough than it need have been. The quartermaster-general's department, which was responsible for intelligence, consisted only of "eight or ten officers, and they not selected for peculiar qualifications, as linguists or surveyors, and not having any permanent establishment of non-commissioned officers or privates under them."<sup>2</sup> Lawrence mentioned the frequent failure to attach an adequate staff to forces in the field, and then he instanced an example of poor staff work:

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge referred to Gough's staff as being "so superannuated that they afford him very little assistance and me still less" - Hardinge to Sir Walter James, 2 May 1845.  
H. P. iv

<sup>2</sup>Lawrence, Sir Henry, Essays, Military and Political, Written in India, London 1859, p. 49

and scarce twelve months before (the Nepalese war scare of December 1843), when a small party was beaten at Khytul in the Seikh states within forty or fifty miles of Kurnaul, - one of our Army Division stations - it was three days before a small force could move. It was THEN found that there was no small-arm ammunition in store and ascertained that a European corps could not move under a fortnight from Sobathoo.<sup>1</sup>

By its very nature and because of its cumbrous administration and its ad hoc staff system, the Indian army was better adapted for small-scale and rapid punitive expeditions that involved the troops nearest at hand, used supplies raised locally, and needed relatively little staff work, than for campaigns more on the European model and scale. Hardinge was probably as aware of the weaknesses of the Indian army as many officers with much greater experience of it than he - as some of his earliest measures demonstrated - but neither he nor they realized that the demoralization amongst the sepoys that led eventually to the Mutiny was as widespread and as serious as it actually was.

Almost as soon as he arrived in India Hardinge turned his attention to attempting to remedy some of the more obvious defects of the Company's service, particularly with regard to the loyalty and discipline of the sepoys. Having spent much of his life in the work of military administration Hardinge was well suited to this task.

In his parting address to Hardinge Captain Shepherd earnestly recommended the native soldier to the new governor-general's

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid, p. 50

protection and encouragement . . . Your kindly offices will be rewarded in the manner which you will most highly value; they will conciliate the affections of the soldiery to the service, strengthen the bonds by which their interests are united with those of the Government, and render them more efficient by enlisting their feelings in support of their duty. At the present moment, difficulties have arisen in our native army requiring to be met by prompt and decisive measures.

The chairman hoped that Hardinge would act towards the sepoy with as much consideration as was "compatible with the maintenance of order and obedience," and finished by enjoining "the strictest economy consistent with the efficiency of the service."<sup>1</sup>

Gough had urged a consideration of the whole subject of the treatment of the sepoy on Ellenborough, but with little success. In Hardinge he found someone more ready to listen to proposals for an increase of pay, the restoration of certain privileges that had been abrogated, and the re-introduction of corporal punishment, "to deter bad characters from entering the service." The measures taken by the two men did not remove the larger grievances that were to erupt in 1857, but they checked the rising tide of discontent in time for the army to face the Sikhs.

In a minute to the military department which Hardinge, as the then secretary for war, saw and annotated, Lord Auckland attached greater importance to treating the sepoy with justice and kindness than he did to evolving new devices for punishment.<sup>2</sup> Hardinge particularly marked passages that

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<sup>1</sup>The Annual Register, 1844, London 1845, pp. 283-5

<sup>2</sup>Minute by Auckland to the military department, 28 Oct. 1841. H. P. 1

pointed out the change from flogging to dismissal from the service and hard labour on the roads, and it is probable that the future governor-general thought this system more wasteful of trained soldiers than was corporal punishment.<sup>1</sup> As a member of parliament Hardinge had always strongly advocated retention of the lash as necessary for the preservation of discipline whenever a bill for its abolition was introduced.

Using the powers given him under the Charter act of 1833 to draw up new articles of war for the native army, Hardinge revised the existing ones to include the restoration of corporal punishment. He was aware of the grave responsibility he assumed in reintroducing this punishment into an army in which a considerable portion of the troops had never been subjected to it, writing in justification that

The cases had become frequent of Sepoys throwing down their arms, refusing obedience and defying the power of their officers, European as well as Native - the declension of discipline was universally admitted<sup>2</sup> (except by the Adjutant General<sup>3</sup>) . . .

Hardinge admitted, when he first sent the new articles to England, that there was some risk as to their reception by the native troops,

but it was so clearly my Duty to pass it, that I have never hesitated. The whole of my Council concur. The Governors and their Councils at the other Presidencies also concur. The three Commanders in chief concur, and Charly Napier, a Radical who wrote a Book against flogging, ardently concurs in my views . . . and 99/100 of the officers of the Army.

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<sup>1</sup>In one instance 67 men of one regiment were sentenced to dismissal.

<sup>2</sup>Maj-Gen. Sir James Lumley, who sent Hardinge a "very intemperate" minute on the subject.

<sup>3</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 23 Oct. 1845. H. P. 1

The governor-general also claimed that the new articles had been well received by the troops: "not the slightest symptom of dissatisfaction has been evinced in the Bengal Army."<sup>1</sup>

If their basic wage of seven rupees a month had been all the pay the sepoys received they would undoubtedly have deserted to the better-paid Sikh army in far greater numbers than they did. But there was a complicated system of pensions and allowances that made service with the Company more attractive than at first it appeared, while the basic pay of the Khalsa was subject to deductions as well as being habitually in arrears, sometimes substantially so.

The "batta" system had always been a bone of contention between governors-general and the court. "Batta" was an allowance given to troops serving in the field within the Company's territories; this was cut in half when they were in cantonments and were thus furnished with quarters at the public expense. There was also a foreign service "batta" given to troops serving in overseas territories or in Indian states like the Punjab or Sind that had not yet come under the Company's jurisdiction. But as soon as these areas were annexed the troops lost their "batta," although they were no nearer home and often were not in permanent cantonments. Similar anomalies occurred in the distribution of the marching "batta" which was given to the troops to cover the cost of transporting their kit. The government's attempts to minimize

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Sir Walter James, 19 Oct. 1845. H. P.

the amount paid in "batta" bore so heavily on the sepoy's that they frequently gave rise to mutinies. As Wellington observed, "There is nothing which soldiers, particularly the natives of India, bear so unwillingly as injustice."<sup>1</sup>

Hardinge plunged into the vexatious issue of allowances very soon after arriving in India. In 1844 Ellenborough had passed a regulation compensating the sepoy when any one article of his daily ration exceeded a certain specified price. In the interests of administrative efficiency Hardinge authorized compensation only where the specified cost of the total daily ration was exceeded, thus cutting the small profit a frugal sepoy could make. This measure, which was poorly executed and widely ignored, was criticized in many quarters and Napier's attempt to revise it in 1849 led to the quarrel with Dalhousie that resulted in the commander-in-chief's resignation.

By an order of 15 July 1845 the governor-general granted hutting money to the Bengal sepoy's, but only on their changing stations. A month later the long-standing dispute as to whether or not the troops in Sind should receive foreign service "batta" was resolved in their favour and they were given the same allowances as those serving in Arracan; in February 1846 the same rates were granted in the Punjab.

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<sup>1</sup>Wellington's memorandum on the "batta" question, 25 May 1842. (Colchester, p. 264)



One measure that Hardinge would have liked to have effected at the outset of his rule was the reduction of the swollen military establishment, but as he explained to his stepson, the moment was inopportune: "With the Army I can do very little - the force cannot be reduced whilst affairs are in their present condition in the Punjaub . . ."<sup>1</sup> He told his wife that the deficiency of revenue prevented him from building roads, canals, and bridges, and supporting education.

All require Money. I am going to send Home a Regiment of British Cavalry and of British Infantry which will be a saving of 100,000 a year but if we had a strong Sikh Government instead of a weak Queen and a drunken profligate brother as her Minister we might do many things by reducing our Military Establishments.<sup>2</sup>

Thus in the short period available to him before the war Hardinge effected a number of important, if sometimes controversial, military reforms despite his task being made, as he complained, "a very up-hill work" by Gough's being one thousand miles away. Unfortunately his efforts to ameliorate service conditions and strengthen discipline had little time to take effect before the war broke out and the poor performance of the Indian troops at Ferozeshah indicated that their morale was still low.

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Sir Walter James, 7 Mar. 1845. H. P. iv

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Lady Hardinge, 7 Aug. 1845. H. P. ii

#### IV. PRECAUTION OR PROVOCATION - BRITISH MILITARY PREPARATIONS, 1844-5

A state of perfect military preparedness, were such a condition attainable, is at best of dubious advantage to the nation aspiring towards it, due both to its heavy financial cost and to its likely diplomatic repercussions. Furthermore it is far from easy to define what, in all foreseeable circumstances, is an optimum level of readiness. Soldiers themselves rarely agree upon when that point has been reached where their forces can face any eventuality with a reasonable prospect of success, and the views of the civil authorities usually only coincide when they accuse their military counterparts of over-preparation and extravagance. Hardinge must consequently have found himself in an ambivalent situation. As a soldier he would undoubtedly have sympathized with Gough's requests for more men, guns, transport and barracks on the frontier. But as the supreme authority in India he had to set limits on military expenditure and avoid any appearance of belligerence that might alarm the Sikhs.

This relationship between the demands of policy and of military preparedness was so delicate that even with the benefit of hindsight historians have found it difficult to determine how far the one should be subordinated to the other, and

consequently the controversy over Hardinge's preparations has never been satisfactorily resolved. As a result Hardinge has been accused both of being unready for war and of having pushed his preparations to the point of provocation.

On the one hand J. M. Ludlow, a contemporary historian, wrote that the British were "so utterly unprepared" for war that they were barely saved by the treachery of the Sikh leaders.<sup>1</sup> The diarist Charles Greville was even more critical of the army's preparedness.

Now that we have got the whole of the Indian news, it is clear that Hardinge's mismanagement has been very great,

he wrote.

He was in a continual cloud of error, not believing that would happen which did, though with every reason for its probability, and consequently making none of the preparations for encountering the danger till so late that there was just a possibility of meeting and repelling it, and no more.<sup>2</sup>

More recent and judicious critics, such as Gough and Innes, felt that the governor-general took prudence too far, thereby increasing rather than decreasing the risk of war. The criticisms levelled against Hardinge by senior officers such as Major-General Thackwell and Sir Charles Napier are synthesized in the words of Lieutenant-Colonel Burton:

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<sup>1</sup>Ludlow, J. M., British India, its Races and its History, 1858, ii, 142. Cited in Singh, Ganda, Private Correspondence relating to the Anglo-Sikh Wars, Patiala and Amritsar 1955, pp. 90-1

<sup>2</sup>Greville, C. C. F., A Journal of the Reign of Queen Victoria from 1837 to 1852, New York 1885, ii, 101-2

In his anxiety to avoid war he imperilled the military situation, exposed himself to the chance of defeat in detail, and the small garrisons of Ferozepore and Ludhiana to the risk of a disaster which was only averted by the enemy's lack of enterprise. Even policy itself was not served by an exhibition of military weakness on the frontier where a display of armed force might have reduced the Khalsa to submission, and thus averted hostilities . . .<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand Indian historians, in building up a picture of British aggression against the Punjab, imply that the Company's forces were well prepared for a war, having begun their preparations in late 1843. Hasrat wrote that the home government's censure of Hardinge's preparations were "unnecessary" and that the British military build-up on the Sutlej "had neither suffered from slackness or dilatoriness."<sup>2</sup> He added, however, that the expectation that the Sikhs would not launch a full-scale invasion had led the British into making faulty dispositions. Mahajan quoted approvingly the verdict of the "Cambridge History of India," that though the British would have been foolish not to have prepared for a war, "there was some point in the words of a hostile critic: 'To be prepared is one thing; to be always making preparations another.'"<sup>3</sup> Typically Henry Lawrence made a spirited defense of his friend's preparations and pointed out that Hardinge had put into the field the largest force in the Company's

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<sup>1</sup>Burton, Lt-Col. R. G., The First and Second Sikh Wars, Simla 1911, p. 15

<sup>2</sup>Hasrat, p. 265

<sup>3</sup>The Cambridge History of India, Cambridge 1929, v, 548

history in order to defeat an enemy less highly regarded than had been the French-led Mysore troops, the Marathas, or the Gurkhas.

Shortly after taking over from Ellenborough, Hardinge wrote to the commander-in-chief to the effect that though it seemed there might be no need to intervene in the Punjab, such was the anarchic state of the country that the British might be forced to act, and at short notice. "It is therefore not advisable, however strong the conviction that the case of necessity will never arise, to relax in any of our military precautions."<sup>1</sup>

Scarcely a week passed without correspondence between Hardinge and Gough concerning the situation on the frontier. After the Gwalior campaign the commander-in-chief's attention was centred on the Punjab and he spent much of his time on or near the frontier. Fortunately Gough understood and accepted, if reluctantly, the need to work within the political and financial bounds set by the government.

I entirely concur in your opinion with regard to any open demonstration of military preparation,

he wrote to Broadfoot at the end of 1844,

and consider such demonstration would be very prejudicial to the formation of a government in the Punjab. On the contrary, I have not made, nor do I intend to make, the slightest movement indicative of distrust on our part.

According to his biographer Gough asked for the smallest force

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Gough, 13 Aug. 1844. (Rait)

<sup>2</sup>Gough to Broadfoot, 26 Dec. 1844. (Broadfoot, pp. 250-1)

on the frontier consistent with the safety of India because he shared Hardinge's anxiety lest the Sikhs be provoked.

However the commander-in-chief was unhappy at being put in a position where he might subsequently be charged with having left the frontier under-manned. He described Hardinge as being

very anxious not to fall into the error of Lord Ellenborough, of making war without ample cause for doing so. This may be all right politically, but it hampers me, so as to give perfect security to all points. He asked me if I intended to fight the whole Sikh army with the force I had here. I said decidedly I would, were they to cross and threaten seriously Ferozepore or Ludhiana. He said I would be greatly abused in England for fighting with so few men, when I had so many at my command. I pointed out that it was the Government that should get the blame, not me. If they gave me cover (in other word, barracks), I saw the expediency of the measure, but without cover I could do nothing.<sup>1</sup>

Hardinge's nephew, Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Wood, refuted the charge against the government:

The cause of our not bringing more men into the field at Ferozshukur than 19,702, having at the time . . . 30,679 men at and north of Umballa exclusive of two European Regiments stationed in the hills, was owing to an order of the C. C.'s that 300 men of each Regiment of Native Infantry should remain at the different stations, when the troops took the field, as Regimental Depots.<sup>2</sup>

On 8 September 1844 Hardinge placed five native infantry regiments at Gough's disposal for distribution between Meerut and the frontier and instructed the commander-in-chief

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<sup>1</sup>Gough to his son, G. S. Gough, 2 Dec. 1845 (Rait)

<sup>2</sup>Lt-Col. R. Wood to Sir Walter James, 3 Sept. 1846. H. P. iv

"to get all our troops of horse artillery and bullocks in complete order; and we propose to send our companies of Europeans, picked men, to fill up vacancies."<sup>1</sup> Two months later he thought that an adequate state of preparedness had been reached.

I do not propose to augment my defensive force of 20,000 men,

he told Peel,

I had some time ago communicated with Sir H. Gough, to sanction the hire of 1500 camels by the commissariat to enable the Regiments at the 5 nearest stations to move at any moment in light marching order - this is an ordinary affair and will cause no alarm, and incur a very trifling expense. In short we are well prepared to watch events, and make our neighbours respect our neutrality, and beyond this state of preparation, I see no necessity for assuming a more warlike attitude.<sup>2</sup>

A month later Hardinge accepted almost in its entirety a scheme submitted to him by Gough which proposed that two armies be formed, one to watch the Punjab, the other Gwalior. The former was to consist of 16,500 men under the command of Sir Robert Dick, and was to be distributed as follows: garrisons of 3,500 men each at Ferozepore and Ludhiana, a cavalry brigade of 2,000 men to police the protected states and maintain communications, 1500 European troops to be stationed in the hills, and 6000 men to be kept in reserve at Ambala. It was not long before the idea of a cavalry brigade was dropped

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<sup>1</sup> Hardinge to Ellenborough, 17 Sept. 1844 (Khushwant Singh, 11, 42)

<sup>2</sup> Hardinge to Peel, 23 Dec. 1844. H. P. 1

because of difficulties over forage. However provision was made for a pontoon-train at Ferozepore. There was some misunderstanding later over the fifty-six boats intended for the train, and Gough thought that Hardinge had counter-manded the order transferring the boats to the frontier as being too aggressive; but after an exchange of letters the boats duly arrived.

Early in the new year the governor-general calculated that in six weeks he could collect 33,000 infantry, 6,000 cavalry, and 100 guns.<sup>1</sup> In February Hardinge claimed that the arrangements on the frontier were "prudent and complete." Reinforcements of two European and seven native infantry regiments and three troops of European horse artillery had been quietly moved up to the frontier, at a "trifling" expense; furthermore these additional troops had been drawn from "the most extreme points of our territory without touching a man on the great road from Cawnpore to the Sutlege."<sup>2</sup>

In March Hardinge told Ellenborough that the Sikh army had been increased by nine thousand men.

We shall now begin to move up the additional Regiments to Ferozpoor, Ludhiana, and Umballa, the barracks etc being nearly ready; and as the fords deepen, and the heat increases, these movements will cause no alarm; but quietly we shall get the troops into their proper places.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Ellenborough, 23 Jan. 1845. (Hasrat, p. 250)

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 7 Feb. 1845. H. P. i

<sup>3</sup>Hardinge to Ellenborough, 18 Mar. 1845. (Broadfoot, p. 293)



As the hot season neared its close units were hurrying up to the frontier without even the pretence of being reliefs for regiments already there. On October 15 the 29th Foot left Muttra for Kasauli. The regiment previously there, the 9th Foot, marched to Ambala where it joined the 31st Foot, whose scheduled departure for England had been deferred because of the threatening situation. Despite the fact that Robert Napier had not completed the cantonment at Ambala these two European infantry regiments were joined by a third, the 80th, which had received orders to leave Agra on October 30. On November 25 the 4th Irregular Cavalry "unexpectedly" received orders to march to the frontier and to be ready for immediate active service; the regiment left Bareilly on December 1 but did not arrive on the frontier in time to participate in the first battles of the war.

In his article in the "Quarterly Review" the Reverend Gleig contended that when Ellenborough returned home "All the towns, from Delhi to Kurnaul, were filled with troops," and added that, except at Ferozepore, Hardinge did not increase the frontier force by a single man or gun.<sup>1</sup> This article upset Hardinge, who drew up a return comparing the number of troops and guns he and Ellenborough made available on the frontier. Excluding the troops at the hill stations, which

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<sup>1</sup>Quarterly Review, June 1846, Vol 78, No. 155, pp. 175-215

remained the same, when Ellenborough left India there were 11,639 men with 48 guns on the frontier as compared with 30,679 men and 68 guns when war broke out. Nor was Ferozepore the only station to benefit from these reinforcements; the garrison at Ludhiana was more than doubled, that at Ambala more than tripled, and that at Meerut, in reserve, raised from 5,873 men and 18 guns to 9,844 men and 26 guns.<sup>1</sup>

While these returns show that Hardinge added 22,911 men and 28 guns to the force on or near the frontier it must be remembered that when a regiment went on active service as much as twenty per cent of its strength would be left behind as depôt troops or as being unfit. Furthermore, the need to leave garrisons to protect Ferozepore, Ludhiana, Bassian, and the hills stations reduced considerably the number of troops that could be put into the field. Thus it was that out of the 32,479 men theoretically available on the frontier only 17,707<sup>2</sup> - not quite 55 per cent - fought at Ferozeshah.

A further charge made by Gleig against Hardinge - that he "carefully abstained from the discussion in Council or elsewhere of topics which might turn men's thoughts to war" and instead devoted most of his time to "his plans for the general improvement of India" - was equally far from the

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge, C. S., p. 76. "You may depend on the above figures, they are taken from official returns" - Lieutenant-Colonel R. Mood.

<sup>2</sup>This is the usually-accepted figure; the partisan Wood, however, claimed that 19,702 men fought on the British side.

truth. It is true that Hardinge discouraged belligerent talk - the Sikhs were particularly sensitive to aggressive comments of the sort indulged in by the "Delhi Gazette" and some of the more bellicose army officers - but he certainly did not damp down sensible discussion of the military situation. On the contrary, he was constantly in touch with the commander-in-chief and the military board, as well as with the military authorities in the other presidencies. As for his council, its members concurred unanimously in his views expressed in an official letter, regarding the policy to be adopted vis à vis the Punjab; besides which their failure to offer any constructive suggestions could hardly have made discussion with them of the military measures that Hardinge had to adopt very fruitful (as has been seen the military member, Sir George Pollock, was remarked upon by Hardinge as being unable to give him any advice in an emergency). The representations of Hardinge's friends brought a retraction in the December 1846 issue of the "Quarterly Review" of much of what Gleig had written.

In a memorandum written in 1837 Sir Henry Fane had strongly urged the need for adequate defenses along the line of the Sutlej, without which Agra and Delhi, "two places of such vast moral importance to the rule of the English in India," would be dangerously exposed to an attack from the west.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, critics of Fane's proposals argued, an enormous

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<sup>1</sup>Memorandum by Sir Henry Fane, 30 May 1837. H. P. 1

risk would be incurred by placing strong forces at posts as far in advance of their support stations as were Ferozepore and Ludhiana.<sup>1</sup> Both Ellenborough and Hardinge regarded Ferozepore as being, in the words of the latter, "somewhat too forward." Gough, however, felt that to hold that post in strength was an acceptable risk, and after a further inspection of the frontier made in the autumn of 1844 he recommended that the inadequate facilities at Ferozepore be improved.

The great problem posed by the two frontier stations was their lack of barrack accommodation. In September 1844 Hardinge told Ellenborough that he had informed Gough of his determination not to build any barracks at Ferozepore for the moment "on account of the alarm which it would create . . .". Gough urged Hardinge to complete a barrack ~~there~~ on which work had been begun at the time of the campaign in Gwalior but had then been halted on Ellenborough's orders. He reminded the new governor-general that the five European regiments agreed upon as the minimum defensive force could not be concentrated on the frontier within four days without the presence of one of them at Ferozepore. In January 1845, therefore, Hardinge gave permission for the completion of the barrack and the stationing at Ferozepore not only of the 62nd Foot but also of two further native infantry regiments and two troops of horse

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<sup>1</sup> Ambala was approximately 145 miles and Meerut 280 miles from Ferozepore; the hill stations were nearly 200 miles from the frontier. Ludhiana was 80 miles from Ferozepore and 65 miles from Ambala.

artillery.

Throughout 1845 there was only one European regiment at Ferozepore, but, in the view of Major-General Sir John Littler, the station commander, the garrison was strong enough to resist a Sikh attack as long as its provisions lasted. But then, belatedly, he changed his mind. On 3 December 1845 the governor-general received a request from Gough that an additional European regiment be sent to Ferozepore; the commander-in-chief enclosed a letter along the same lines from Littler. On December 5 Hardinge gave his approval, saying:

My view has always been expressed and recorded that the simplest plan of overcoming the difficulty is to increase the force. I am therefore very glad to have my opinion supported by your Excellency's proposal to have a second European regiment stationed at Ferozepore.<sup>1</sup>

Two days later the governor-general ordered the 80th Foot to march to Ferozepore, but he himself had left Ambala two days earlier and so the regiment did not leave that station till December 10, too late to join Littler before the Sikhs crossed the river.

The principal support station to Ferozepore and Ludhiana since the abandonment, on grounds of health, of Karnal in 1842<sup>2</sup> was Ambala, a point mid-way between Meerut and the

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<sup>1</sup>Rait

<sup>2</sup>Some sources (Punjab District Gazetteers, Lahore 1919, vi-A, 210) state that the station was abandoned as early as 1841, but the probability is that the withdrawal of troops from Karnal did not begin until late 1842, and when disturbances broke out in Kaithal in March 1843 it was a force from that cantonment that was sent to quell them according to Bosworth Smith.

frontier. The choice of Ambala was criticized on the grounds that it was not near enough to the frontier, but the probable reason for Ellenborough's not having chosen Sirhind, a station recommended by Sir David Ochterlony in 1810, was that it belonged to the Sikhs of Patiala. Hardinge himself wrote in 1847 that "on strict military principles" the best site for the support station would have been a point a few miles to the rear of Bassian, an important supply depot between Ferozepore and Sirhind.

Not content with making the broadly political decisions that regulated Gough and his subordinates in their preparations, the governor-general involved himself to a notable degree in the more mundane spheres of transportation and supply. To the extent that governmental economies hindered the operations of the commissariat Hardinge must be responsible for there being insufficient carriage and stores available at the outbreak of the war, but his personal involvement in the collection of supplies and of the means to transport them does not make him culpable for the fact that food, ammunition, carriage and hospital stores on the necessary scale had not been assembled in time. The organization of such supplies was outside the governor-general's competence. In fact it was only his efforts that prevented the shortcomings of the commissariat from having an even more detrimental effect than they did on the operations of the army.

It has been seen that towards the close of 1844

Hardinge sanctioned the hiring of 1500 camels so as to enable the troops near the frontier to move rapidly on it when required. Two months later he told his stepson that he had collected "on the great trunk road, leading to the frontier, and at convenient distances" 500 elephants and 7000 camels, "exclusive of minor carriage etc. etc."<sup>1</sup>

At the end of October 1845 Hardinge informed Gough that

on or before the 12th of November arrangements will have been made, by which the commissariat department will be prepared to equip nearly two-thirds of the force at, and in advance of, Meerut, with the necessary means of marching at the shortest notice.<sup>2</sup>

He wanted seven troops of horse artillery, six companies of foot artillery, four light field batteries, two dragoon regiments, three light and two irregular cavalry regiments, five European and thirteen native infantry regiments, and six companies of sappers and miners to be made ready to move quickly but economically. Transport was to be hired "at the halting rates."<sup>3</sup>

How far these instructions were implemented was a matter for station commanders. At Cawnpore Major-General Thackwell noted in his diary on November 26 that he had been

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Sir Walter James, 8 Feb. 1845. H. P. iv

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Gough, 24 Oct. 1845. (The War in India)

<sup>3</sup>Ibid

"camel-hunting;" at Ambala, on the other hand, when the order to march on the frontier was received Lieutenant Denham-Cookes reported that "we were quite unprepared - for in this country one is obliged to have camels and carts, and numerous Niggers to carry tents and Baggage"<sup>1</sup> - obviously few of these things had been collected.

Shortly before hostilities began Hardinge asked the deputy commissary-general how soon he could collect supplies for 10,000 men, to be located at intervals of twenty-five miles between Karnal and Ferozepore, with a view to limiting the amount of carriage needed by the Meerut force. He was told that the task would require six weeks. Thereupon, aware now that time was running out, Hardinge gave Broadfoot five days to collect the supplies. Broadfoot had already detailed his assistants to take charge of the raising of supplies along particular roads in their districts, and, using summary methods on the unwilling chiefs, he was able to carry out Hardinge's orders in the time given him. "Even after his death his subordinate officers became and continued till very late in the campaign the real commissariat of the army."<sup>2</sup>

On December 14 Hardinge deputed one of Broadfoot's Indian assistants, Peer Ibraheem Khan,

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<sup>1</sup>Bolitho, Hector, The Galloping Third, London 1963 (?), p. 148

<sup>2</sup>Edwardes, Herbert, Calcutta Review, Vol. vi, No. 11, p. 260 (Broadfoot, p. 382)



to collect five thousand camels, loaded with twenty thousand maunds<sup>1</sup> of wheat, rice and other grain, for the army at Ferozpur, and also to proceed to Bhawalpur and convey a letter from the Governor-General to Sir Charles Napier, and supply with provisions the troops advancing from Sindh.<sup>2</sup>

Peer Ibraheem Khan was able by 8 February 1846 to deliver the camels and supplies to Ferozepore.

As soon as the battle of Ferozeshah was over Hardinge wrote to John Lawrence, magistrate for the Delhi area, "in his own handwriting, and in hot haste," asking for ammunition, siege guns, and provisions.<sup>3</sup> Lawrence was able to collect four thousand carts in a very short time, each of which he arranged to have driven by its owner. Men worked day and night at Delhi turning out cannon-balls and bullets and as soon as Lawrence had assembled sufficient supplies and ammunition he sent the convoy up to the army. It arrived on February 8 and two days later the battle of Sobraon was fought.

The most glaring failure in the British preparations was the inadequate supply of artillery ammunition. Time and again both Hardinge and Gough deplored the effect this had on the campaign. From the start of the campaign it was clear that cannon-balls were in short supply; there was probably

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<sup>1</sup>A maund weighted approximately eighty pounds.

<sup>2</sup>Peer Ibraheem Khan, Bahadur, Memoir of Peer Ibraheem Khan, Bahadur, London 1852, p. 15

<sup>3</sup>Bosworth Smith, p, 187

no shortage of powder since a two-year supply was generally kept at Papamau near Allahabad. When the Sikh garrison at Whadni fired on the British on December 16 William Hoff, who was accompanying Hardinge as camp clerk, remarked that the fire was not returned, "an indication probably that we had no superfluous ammunition."<sup>1</sup>

On the morning of December 22, at Ferozeshah, the British came extremely close to defeat as a result of the artillery ammunition having been exhausted, and as it was they resorted to the use of blanks. At the outset of the campaign the 6-pounders had only 166 rounds per gun, the 9-pounders 124 rounds. This amount might barely have sufficed had not seven of the eighteen spare limbers brought into action by Lieutenant-Colonel Geddes blown up. According to Hardinge, the artillery fired approximately 240 rounds a gun "Over 3 days."<sup>2</sup>

After Ferozeshah the ammunition at Ferozepore became available, but was quickly shot away. The Meerut force, although ordered to be ready for service three weeks before finally it marched, reached the front with only 120 rounds per gun - despite the fact that Meerut was only forty miles from the magazine at Delhi. Some of these guns ran out of ammunition before the battle of Aliwal had ended.

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<sup>1</sup>Reeves-Brown, G. Moodkee and Ferozeshah, 1845, J. S. A. H. R. 1934, Vol. ~~XXII~~, No. 49, p. 40

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 21 Mar. 1846. H. P. 1

The shortage of heavy artillery and ammunition was the point Hardinge urged most strongly in justification of the widely-criticized failure to pursue the Sikhs across the Sutlej immediately after Ferozeshah.<sup>1</sup> He told Peel that Brigadier Smith, the commanding officer of engineers,

unanimously supported by all the Field Officers of Engineers and Artillery required 76 pieces of Artillery and 52,000 rounds of heavy ammunition before the Army could advance on Lahore.<sup>2</sup>

Hardinge told Gough that "no movement whatever in advance on an extended scale can take place till the field gun ammunition shall have arrived . . ."<sup>3</sup> The delay in bringing up adequate ordnance could have had serious repercussions on the campaign by extending it into the hot weather period.

Not only did the lack of artillery and ammunition hinder British offensive plans, it also permitted the Sikhs to re-establish a bridge-head on the left bank of the Sutlej, at Sobraon. The troops' morale fell considerably when Gough could neither prevent this nor attack the Sikhs' entrenched camp after it was established. The commander-in-chief told a Mr. Arbuthnot that he

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<sup>1</sup>Sir Charles Napier put the point most succinctly: "We stood victorious but were unable to move: no provisions, no magazines. Thus we remained till the 26th, I believe, paralysed! . . . and but 40 miles from the enemy's capital!" - Bruce, p. 337

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 21 Mar. 1846. H. P. 1

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

could destroy the bridge whenever I pleased, but really we moved up in such a hurry, and so very unexpected was their crossing that we are by no means prepared, and I do not wish to throw away a shot, as we shall want all we<sup>1</sup> have and can muster to drive them out of Lahore.

Even when adequate resources were at hand they were badly used. Brigadier Gowan, who commanded the artillery, promised that the heavy mortars would have seventy rounds each at Sobraon; but Captain Conran later wrote that he and his fellow battery commanders were specifically ordered to prepare only twenty rounds per gun,<sup>2</sup> despite there being, as Hardinge observed, "a very large supply in camp at their command."<sup>3</sup> The artillery was mishandled throughout the battle and it was only through the efforts of the governor-general that the field artillery, which for want of trained artillerymen had been left in camp and was not in the least ready (its horses were dispersed and being watered), was brought into action at the close of the battle. Furthermore the two-hour bombardment by the heavy artillery of the crowded Sikh entrenchments had little effect since the guns were placed too far away and the fuses of the mortar shells were too short.

Not only did the Bengal artillery suffer from a lack of ammunition but throughout the war, except for at Sobraon, it was overmatched by its Sikh counterpart. This relative

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<sup>1</sup>Gough to Mr. A. Arbuthnot, 15 Jan. 1846. (Rait)

<sup>2</sup>Conran, H. M., Autobiography of an Indian Officer, London 1870 (?), p. 159

<sup>3</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 21 Mar. 1846. H. P. 1

inferiority would have been still greater had not Hardinge, helped by his experience as a former clerk of the ordnance, turned his attention at the beginning of 1845 to the artillery and, in conjunction with Sir George Pollock, effected several important improvements.

In January 1845 the governor-general wrote privately to the governors of Madras and Bombay to ask for remounts for the Bengal artillery; nine hundred horses arrived at Muttra in November. As a result four field batteries in the Sirhind division that had hitherto been drawn by bullocks turned over to horses, while those batteries that were previously horse-drawn had their complement of horses considerably increased. In addition two 12-pounder batteries were provided with elephants. In July, as the result of a reorganization of the artillery service throughout India, the Bengal artillery lost one European and two native companies. However, the proportion of European officers was increased by the retention of those attached to the disbanded companies, thus rectifying the shortage of European officers, a deficiency that had been seriously felt on a number of occasions in the past.

In the last month before the war the scale of the governor-general's intervention in the concentration of the army greatly increased. On November 20 Broadfoot reported that the Sikh government was planning to move 40,000 to 60,000 men towards the Sutlej. Although he quickly followed this despatch with a second that showed that invasion was less

imminent than he had at first implied Gough had already ordered the 9th Lancers to leave Meerut for Ambala and had instructed the remainder of the force at the former station to be ready to move to Karnal. The other units in the Meerut division were told to be prepared to move at short notice.

Initially Hardinge concurred in the steps taken by Gough but on November 24, feeling that an invasion in force was improbable, and relying on Littler's and Wheeler's assurances that Ferozepore and Ludhiana were sufficiently strong, the governor-general counter-manded the order to the 9th Lancers "After a full and satisfactory consultation with his Excellency."<sup>1</sup> That regiment had left Meerut on November 25 and had marched nineteen miles when the order to return arrived by express camel. Had it been allowed to continue it would have been in time to participate at Mudki and Ferozeshah. Hardinge reported to the secret committee that he had postponed for the moment, and until he had had further consultations with Gough, any change in the current distribution of the troops, but "eventually some alterations will be made ..."<sup>2</sup>

Gough did not protest the counter-march of the 9th Lancers, but he felt the loss of the extra troops:

We delayed too long moving, and the troops I put in motion being in part counter-manded has crippled us. However, I have ample to cut the Sikhs in pieces; BUT THEY ARE NOT IN HAND AS THEY SHOULD BE . . . The G. G. is now with me, he has placed all at my disposal, and now sees that it would have been better had my proposals been carried before into effect.

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to the Secret Committee, 2 Dec. 1845. (The War in India)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. <sup>3</sup>Gough to G.S. Gough, 15 Dec. 1845. (Rait)

In the days immediately prior to and following the Sikh invasion there was a confusion of orders and counter-orders; occasionally some units received no instructions whatever. Hardinge's share in all this activity was considerable. He had at last abandoned the position where he refused to do anything too overt for fear of alarming the Sikhs. On December 7 and 8, when he heard that the Sikhs were making large-scale military preparations, he wrote to Gough directing him to move up to the frontier on December 11 the troops at Ambala, Meerut, and other stations in the rear. Wheeler was told to be ready to move at short notice.

Shortly after Broadfoot and Abbott brought him news of the Sikhs' first crossings Hardinge ordered the latter to race to the hills and bring up the 29th Foot and the 1st Bengal European Regiment. On December 11 the governor-general rode over to Ludhiana to inspect the garrison; entirely on his own responsibility he ordered the evacuation of the station, leaving only a small force of the less fit men to hold the fort. The troops thus freed were sent to cover the important grain depot at Bassian whose loss to a sudden Sikh inroad would have seriously dislocated the provisioning of the advancing British troops.

Gough had not opposed the evacuation of Ludhiana, as Charles Hardinge suggested,<sup>1</sup> but had contented himself with

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge, C. S., p. 81

saying that it depended on the size of the attacking force as to whether the station should be defended or not. Sir Harry Smith said of Hardinge's action that it was "one of the most able and enterprising movements at this stage of the war . . ."<sup>1</sup> However, even though the governor-general was on the spot when he ordered the evacuation, its execution was accompanied by the confusion that characterized many of the British actions in the early stages of the war. The orderly who was given the message did not deliver it to the 50th Foot, and that regiment did not move off with the rest of Wheeler's force on the morning of December 13 and had to race to catch up.

There was worse confusion at Ambala. According to the records of the 3rd Light Dragoons on December 8 all the troops at that station were "ordered to be held in readiness to march to field service at the shortest notice."<sup>2</sup> But it seems that the order was not generally known until a few hours before the Sikhs crossed the Sutlej, and this accounts for the lack of preparation attested to by Lieutenant Denham-Cookes. Lieutenant John Cumming complained that when his regiment, the 80th Foot, left Ambala no instructions were given it as to where precisely it was to go or what it was to do with the troops' families and with the heavy baggage. For two days the women and children and the heavy baggage attempted to keep up as the regiment advanced over very difficult terrain,

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<sup>1</sup>Smith, ii, 146

<sup>2</sup>Bolitho, p. 147



only to find a horseman waiting with orders for the families and baggage to return to Ambala.

Better organization was, however, displayed in the advance from the hills of the 29th Foot and the 1st Bengal European Regiment. The historian of the 1st Bengal Europeans wrote that the regiment had received no instructions but, suspecting that it might have to make a sudden move, "the officers therefore had been quietly preparing for every contingency."<sup>1</sup> Hardinge's order for the two regiments to march on the frontier was received on the evening of December 10 and they spent the night issuing ammunition and eliminating the unfit; the march was begun barely twelve hours after the units were given their orders. The 29th Foot received its camp equipment and transport at Kalka without a hitch; the 1st Bengal Europeans, who were accompanied by the 11th and 41st Native Infantry regiments, went through the same process at Mani Majra. These units then joined forces at Kalka and proceeded by forced marches to the frontier, covering nearly two hundred miles in nine days marching despite being accompanied by four pieces of heavy artillery. With typical consideration Hardinge sent his own elephants together with a band and camels carrying fresh water to encourage these troops on their last march.

Despite the preparations that had been made along the

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<sup>1</sup>Innes, Lt-Col P. R., The History of the Bengal European Regiment, London, 1885, p. 371

routes to the frontier, the speed made by the advancing troops over very difficult roads resulted in their outstripping their supplies. Gough wrote of the difficulties faced by these men that

Their perpetual labour (allowed) them scarcely time to cook their food, even when they received it, and hardly an hour for repose, before they were called upon for renewed exertions.<sup>1</sup>

The nights were short, the water was bad, and the army's diet on this gruelling march consisted largely of "elephants' lugs" - heavy cakes used as haversack rations.

The bullocks could make no pretense of keeping up; nor even could most of the camels. The men were in light marching order, and this brought an added vexation when they had to sleep on the bare ground: "The weather had turned very cold, and the men had not even their great coats . . . The officers fared hardly better."<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless morale was high, and when the Sikh advance was reported on December 18 Cumming thought it "astonishing to see men who a few minutes before could hardly crawl, fly to their arms, apparently as fresh and vigorous as if they had undergone no fatigue."<sup>3</sup> After the battle of Mudki reinforcements came up together with fresh supplies and each man was given two days' cooked rations and

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<sup>1</sup>Petre, F. Loraine, The History of the Norfolk Regiment, Norwich 1905 (?), 1, 311-2

<sup>2</sup>Lt. J. Cumming to his father, 30 July 1846 (The Night of Ferozeshah in The Army Quarterly, Jan. 1937, Vol 33, p. 275)

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p. 276

a "profusion of grog."

The Meerut force, covering much the same ground a fortnight after the troops from Ambala, was more fortunate. In addition to moving in two bodies the march of the reserve force was less hasty than that of the troops under Gough, and the supply system was functioning better. The 9th Lancers, the 43rd and 59th Native Infantry, and some sappers and miners set out on December 11, under the command of Colonel Campbell. At Karnal this brigade rid itself of its superfluous heavy baggage and any horses not considered fit for campaigning. But even though the supply situation had to an extent been regularized, there were still deficiencies. Captain Humbley complained that "yesterday and to-day we were obliged to breakfast upon what chance threw in our way."<sup>1</sup>

Campbell's brigade was as subject to contradictory orders as had been those regiments that were first rushed to the Sutlej. Hardinge sent an express to Campbell, ordering him to capture the fort of Whadni if it was still held by the Sikhs; Whadni was on the road to Ferozepore which was the brigade's objective. But on December 31, when the force was in the vicinity of Faridkot, a town fairly near Ferozepore, Gough sent orders diverting it to Ludhiana, which was much further away. Campbell had, therefore, to retrace his steps to Bassian.

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<sup>1</sup>Humbley, W. W. W., Journal of a Cavalry Officer, London 1854, p. 50

In the course of the day, soon after we had finished our long and fatiguing march, we were surprised to find that we were to return in the direction of Ferozepore, in company with Major General Sir John Grey's detachment,<sup>1</sup> which at this time, was a march or two in our rear.<sup>2</sup>

In the short time available to him Hardinge concentrated nearly 40 per cent of the total regular force in Bengal between Meerut and the frontier, including most of the European troops, as well as 98 guns. This number represented a considerable increase on the strength left in the area by Ellenborough, and had Hardinge added still further to it the British hold on the presidency would have been dangerously weak. The poor distribution of this force was partly owing to the contradictory and partial information available to Hardinge, which led him gravely to misjudge the strength and intentions of the Sikhs, and partly to his belief that he would have ample warning of an invasion. Furthermore, placing the troops on the frontier itself might not only spark a war he wished to avoid as being unnecessary, but would both be extremely costly and dangerous since the native troops would be open to Sikh subversion. Therefore, in terms of the available information and Indian precedent Hardinge was, and thought himself, adequately prepared, at least as far as men and guns were concerned.

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<sup>1</sup>Grey had set out with the main body of the Meerut troops on December 16.

<sup>2</sup>Humbley, p. 110

The shortage of carriage and supplies has led some observers to think that the troops were collected near the frontier simply as a deterrent against Sikh ambitions, without any real expectation of their being needed to repel an invasion. However, the collection of a pontoon-train at Ferozepore and Hardinge's personal efforts to remedy the logistic deficiencies he found suggest that, whatever policy dictated in the direction of allaying Sikh fears, he wanted the army to be fully ready for any eventuality. Though hindsight has revealed serious inadequacies in the British preparations, for the army to cross the Sutlej only eight weeks after the outbreak of hostilities with 24,000 men, 40 siege-guns, and 68,000 baggage animals suggests that the lack of preparedness of Hardinge and Gough was nothing like as great as their critics claimed.

## V. HARDINGE AND THE FIRST SIKH WAR

The disadvantages of civilian supervision of military operations have often been demonstrated. The terrible presence of the représentants en mission at their headquarters exercised a baneful influence on the generals of revolutionary France, although the former did not go to the extent of vetoing the battle plans of the field commanders as Hardinge was to do at Ferozeshah. No commanding general can adequately perform his functions when he is under the eye of a civilian who either has a power of veto over his plans or can report his failings to a government which regards punishment as a natural corollary of any lack of success. Once he is subject to such tactical restraint he cannot reasonably be held fully responsible for the outcome of operations conducted by the troops under his nominal command.

In India there was a precedent for Hardinge's accompanying his commander-in-chief on a campaign. In 1843 Ellenborough, who always envisaged the governor-general as a military leader, was present at the battle of Maharajpur, where his coolness under fire delighted the army. But his only active interference in the conduct of the campaign was essentially political: he insisted that when the army moved towards Gwalior it should leave its siege guns at Agra so as not to alarm the Marathas.

Hardinge, on the other hand, played a large part in the direction of the first Sikh war and has therefore borne his share of the criticism levelled at the tactical handling of the British troops in that war.

When early in 1845 it became likely that the governor-general might join the army in the event of a war, Sir Charles Napier wrote: "My fear is that our having two chiefs will do mischief; the real commander has ability and power, but is not the chief General."<sup>1</sup> When the commander-in-chief joined Hardinge at Bassian the latter turned over the direction of the campaign to him, but he had no intention of passing over the opportunity of joining in the fighting. At Mudki he took charge of Brigadier M'Caskill's division after the latter was killed. One witness thought Hardinge exposed himself imprudently, but "it struck me that Sir Henry's presence was of great advantage in preserving the confidence and directing the movement of a part of our force."<sup>2</sup>

On the morning of December 19, the day after the battle, the problem posed by the presence at the commander-in-chief's headquarters of a soldier governor-general was strikingly demonstrated. Just as the staff were finishing their breakfast the Sikhs were reported to be attacking. "Then ensued a scene which I hope never again to witness," Captain Robert Napier wrote.

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<sup>1</sup>Bruce, p. 327

<sup>2</sup>Coley, p. 22

Orders were given by the C. in. C; counter-orders by the Governor-General. Troops were told to go to their lines to cook, then to stand fast, then to cook, until the Sipahis, wearied, said they preferred to remain where they were.<sup>1</sup>

Later that day, however, anxious as any soldier would be to play a useful role in the forthcoming battles, Hardinge put his services at the commander-in-chief's disposal. Gough suggested that the governor-general could serve in no other capacity than that of second-in-command, commanding the left wing.

There was nothing new in a governor-general's participation in an Indian campaign, but it was a fresh departure for one formally to accept a position subordinate to the commander-in-chief. In emergencies Hardinge's predecessors had supplanted their commanders-in-chief through the use of a supplementary commission conferred, when the need arose, by the home authorities. The governor-general was ultimately accountable for the security of India and Hardinge's voluntary acceptance of a subordinate position in effect temporarily transferred this responsibility to the commander-in-chief. The probability is that Hardinge did not envisage a situation in which he and Gough would differ radically on a major tactical issue, and that he agreed to become second-in-command simply in order to be able to participate in the fighting, a temptation to which a man with such wide powers and responsibilities ought not to have succumbed.

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<sup>1</sup>Napier, Lt-Col. the Hon. H. D., Field Marshal Lord Napier of Magdala G. C. B., London 1927, p. 44



The authorities in London held the view that the same man who had to decide when and where the military arm of government should be used ought to be the one to use it to attain his objective. On 24 February 1846 Ripon wrote on behalf of the cabinet that

It has a very strange and somewhat unseemly appearance that the Governor-General should be acting as the second in command to the Commander-in-Chief in the field; and as these Punjab affairs are, and must necessarily be, so much mixed up with political matters, it is quite reasonable that the same head should direct both. We think that the best mode in which this could be done is by giving you (as was done in the case of Lord Wellesley in 1800) the commission of 'Captain-General and Commander-in-Chief' . . . The possession of the same powers will not COMPEL you to exercise the power given you at all times and upon all occasions, but it will enable you at your own discretion to avail yourself of it.<sup>1</sup>

On March 7 Ripon wrote of the legal difficulties involved in granting Hardinge a commission similar to that held by Wellesley. But the home government was still anxious to provide the governor-general with a military authority superior to Gough's and had therefore adopted an idea put forward by Wellington whereby Hardinge should receive a Letter of Service from the Queen to enable him as 'a Lieutenant-General on the Staff to command personally the troops in India.'<sup>2</sup> The war, however, ended before this idea could be put into effect.

There were occasions when Hardinge appeared to have

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<sup>1</sup>Ripon to Hardinge, 24 Feb. 1846. (Hardinge, C. S., pp. 104-5)

<sup>2</sup>Ripon to Hardinge, 7 Mar. 1846. (Hardinge, C. S., pp. 105-6)

forgotten that he was second-in-command although generally he handled his subordinate role loyally and with ability. Nonetheless his early disillusion with Gough's abilities made him realize that he had put himself in a difficult position. "I know I am not responsible for military misconceptions," he told Ripon five days after Ferozeshah, "nor will I say a word on the extraordinary position in which I am placed."<sup>1</sup> Perhaps in a move to solve this problem Hardinge and Gough agreed during the period of inaction after Ferozeshah, that Napier should be instructed without delay to replace the governor-general as second-in-command.

In the two days following the battle reinforcements and fresh supplies came up and the army licked its wounds. On the evening of December 20 Gough explained to his senior officers the plan of attack for the following day. Hardinge was absent from this meeting, being represented by Colonel Blucher Wood, his military secretary.<sup>2</sup> It was decided to attack the Sikh position at Ferozeshah at about 11 a. m., if necessary without the aid of Littler's force, which was blockaded in Ferozepore by Tej Singh.

At about the time this plan was being detailed by Gough, Hardinge sent a message to Littler suggesting he join the main force. The suggestion was, however, qualified by the advice that Littler should use his own discretion and do

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Ripon, 27 Dec. 1845. (Hardinge, C. S., p. 103)

<sup>2</sup>There is no reference to this conference in C. S. Hardinge's biography of his father.

nothing to hazard his troops or his station. Luckily for him a demonstration by Tej Singh prevented Littler marching out on December 20, since had he moved, as proposed, to Sultan-Khanwala he would have found large Sikh forces both before and behind him, while Gough's army was still at Mudki.

"However on the 20th came another letter from the Governor-General saying he was to advance next day and that we should meet him a little south of Sultan-Khanwala," one of Littler's officers wrote.<sup>1</sup> His account makes it clear that it was on Hardinge's initiative that Littler's garrison marched out to join the main force. In his report on the battle Littler wrote that he left Ferozepore "In pursuance of instructions received from the Right Honourable the Governor-General, under date the 20th instant . . ."<sup>2</sup> Hardinge himself felt that, but for his step in contacting Littler, "we should on the 21st have had 5000 men, 21 guns and 2 Regiments (of) cavalry less in action."<sup>3</sup>

Gough knew that December 21 was the shortest day of the year and he intended to attack early. He knew the summons to Littler had been sent and was apprised of the march of the Ferozepore garrison by staff officers who passed between the two forces. Yet still he determined to attack; it is probable,

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<sup>1</sup>Lt-Col. the Hon. Thomas Ashburnham to the Marquess of Sligo, 30 Jan. 1846. (J. S. A. H. R. 1932 Vol xi, pp. 65-7)

<sup>2</sup>Maj.-Gen. Sir J. Littler to the Adj.-Gen. of the Army, 25 Dec. 1845. (The War in India)

<sup>3</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 30 Dec. 1845. (The War in India)

therefore, that he had no intention of using Littler as anything but a reserve. Gough was always convinced that the decision to await Littler was wrong, but, perhaps out of loyalty to the governor-general, he wrote in his official report that the junction of the two forces "accomplished one of the great objects of all our harassing marches and privations, in the relief of this division of our army from the blockade of numerous forces by which it was surrounded."<sup>1</sup>

Littler received Hardinge's message at about midnight on December 20 and, after leaving two regiments at Ferozepore, set out at 8 a. m. with approximately 5000 men and 21 guns, cleverly eluding Tej Singh. Gough and the Ambala force had already been on the march for four hours. Whatever the reason for it, Littler's delayed start was to have a considerable bearing on the fortunes of the day; had he marched earlier it is probable that the controversy over Hardinge's decision to waste precious daylight hours in awaiting him would never have arisen.

By 10 a. m. the Ambala force was facing the eastern side of the quadrilateral Sikh entrenchments at a distance of two miles. After making a personal reconnaissance of the enemy positions Gough went to Hardinge and proposed an immediate attack. This proposal apparently took Hardinge completely by surprise - according to his son Littler's ~~note~~ and his

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<sup>1</sup> Gough to Hardinge, 22 Dec. 1845. (The War in India)

orders had been carefully laid down "with the entire concurrence of Sir H. Gough."<sup>1</sup> The governor-general took Gough aside to discuss the matter. They were accompanied by Captain Hardinge and Gough's military secretary, Captain Haines.

Gough again urged the necessity of attacking at once, while Hardinge countered with the suggestion that the force move on to meet Littler before opening the battle.<sup>2</sup> According to Haines "Time, the freshness and vigour of his men were infinitely of more value in the C. in. C.'s eyes than Sir John Littler's 5,500 men and 20 guns."<sup>3</sup> Gough was also very concerned for his communications and his wounded left at Mudki.

Hardinge did not attach the importance Gough did to the army's communications. "Forced to make the Commander in Chief strong I have on every occasion risked our communications with the rear," he told Peel.<sup>4</sup> In any event these communications were tenuous, running as they did through a hostile and war-like population. Hardinge's desire to await Littler's troops was probably influenced by the painful discoveries made at

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge, C. S. pp. 90-91

<sup>2</sup>It appears that while on his way up the Ganges in November Hardinge read and noted Marshal Marmont's De l'Esprit des Institutions Militaires, published in 1845. Marmont wrote of strategy, that it had the "object of uniting the largest possible number of combatants in the field of Battle, ..." - H. P. vii

<sup>3</sup>Rait, Robert S., The Life of Field-Marshal Sir Frederick Paul Haines, London 1911, p.43

<sup>4</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 31 Mar. 1846. (The War in India)

Mudki of the fighting quality of the Sikhs and the poor morale of the sepoys.

Finally, when Gough proved obdurate, Hardinge told him that he intended exercising his powers as governor-general to forbid an attack on the Sikhs before Littler came up. Gough was forced to comply. "For the only time in Indian history, the definite plans of a Commander-in-Chief were, in the face of the enemy, over-ruled by his official superior."<sup>1</sup> In overruling Gough Hardinge's main consideration may well have been the fear that without Littler the possibility of a complete defeat would have been greater; had the Ambala troops been defeated without his support the Ferozepore garrison would have been doomed anyway.

Hardinge later made no attempt to play down the exercise of his authority. "My position has been most painful; I have had to exercise my authority very peremptorily . . ."<sup>2</sup> he told Ellenborough. Between the battles of Mudki and Ferozeshah Hardinge had already, by communicating with the commander-in-chief in writing, put subtle pressure on Gough to adopt certain measures the governor-general thought advisable.

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<sup>1</sup>Rait, Gough, 11, 16

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Ellenborough, 30 Dec. 1845. (Broadfoot, p. 413)

Why did I write these letters to Sir H. Gough? Why not make friendly suggestions which he would adopt and execute? I answer that his memory is most defective, that he considered his powers as C. C. in Military details superseded mine (which opinion of his right or wrong I have over-ruled) and I therefore was obliged to record my wishes in order to secure the fulfilment of the most obvious and important decisions.<sup>1</sup>

In compliance with Hardinge's wishes Gough began the march round the Sikh position to meet Littler. By now the men were tired and, according to Cumming, "Not a man of us had tasted anything that day, not even a drop of water . . ."<sup>2</sup> Hardinge, on the other hand, claimed emphatically that the troops were not jaded, and in fact the march was not very exacting compared with those before Mudki, while the men were able to breakfast during Gough's reconnaissance of the enemy positions.

The two British forces were united somewhere between the villages of Shukur and Misriwala and halted on a line some three thousand yards to the south-west of the Sikh entrenchments. Gough now had under his command approximately 18,000 men and 65 guns; the additional cannon brought by Littler redressed somewhat the heavy Sikh preponderance in artillery. There is some dispute as to when Littler's troops joined Gough but it was probably, as Hardinge suggested, shortly after 1 p. m.; Littler began his attack at 3.30 p. m., and even then it was premature. Although a certain amount

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 30 Dec. 1845. H. P.

<sup>2</sup>The Army Quarterly, 1937, Vol 33, p. 277

of time was needed to get the troops into position for the assault, the extended delay before battle was joined was completely unaccountable. Sir Harry Smith criticized the loss of this valuable time and added that the breathing-space was not even used fully to brief the senior officers.

Hardinge's critics have made much of the fact that after its first attack was repulsed Littler's division, whose delayed arrival had wasted so many precious daylight hours, took little further part in the battle. However, the overwhelming fire directed at Reid's brigade indicated that Littler's division kept occupied a considerable part of the Sikh army, particularly its artillery.

The Ambala troops succeeding in seizing part of the Sikh position but when darkness came at about 6 p. m. these gains had not been consolidated. With magazines exploding in the Sikh camp and the enemy still holding some of the entrenchments, it was decided to withdraw the disorganized British regiments. Gough was out of touch with Smith, who had captured the village of Ferozeshah and only retired much later, and Littler, whose men had fallen back on Misriwala. Hardinge later complained that Gleig had implied that while the right wing under Gough had been completely successful, the left, under himself, had been obliged to withdraw. Despite Littler's repulse he claimed that his troops had taken everything on their front, and he added that Gough's men, as well as his own, withdrew from the burning camp.



All night the governor-general moved among the men, ascertaining the state of their morale and giving them encouragement. He vigorously rejected advice that the army retreat to lick its wounds:

The despondency of several brave officers was great during the night. My resolution was recorded three or four times when they came to me with timid counsels of retreat upon Firozpur, that our line of duty was clear, namely, to wait patiently for daylight and then, without a moment's hesitation, to attack the enemy and carry everything before us that remained to be carried.<sup>1</sup>

Hardinge hinted that it was his resolution that had buttressed Gough in his decision to fight the battle to a conclusion. In 1847, however, a controversy arose around a newspaper account that claimed the commander-in-chief had countermanded an order to retreat issued by Hardinge on the night of December 21. When Hardinge asked Gough whether he had ever ordered or recommended a retreat, the latter returned an evasive reply which implied that the governor-general had advised a retreat through the medium of two of his staff-officers. There followed a lengthy and heated correspondence which engendered a certain amount of bad feeling even though Gough largely retracted his implied criticism of Hardinge.

As soon as the British regiments had reformed on the morning of December 22 they attacked the Sikh entrenchments again, this time over-running them with comparative ease. No sooner was the enemy camp occupied than Gough's exhausted

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to the president of the council, 5 Jan. 1846.  
(Hardinge, C. S., p. 94)

army was confronted with Tej Singh's fresh troops. The British were so weakened that they must have stood in real danger of defeat had the Sikh commander-in-chief shown any qualities of leadership. Whatever his motives, Tej Singh inexplicably withdrew, although the British lacked ammunition for their guns, and their cavalry, together with most of the artillery, was retiring towards Ferozepore as the result of a mistaken order.

The news of the victory was received in England with relief rather than jubilation. Charles Greville wrote that through Hardinge's "negligences and errors" the British had suffered the heaviest loss they had ever sustained in an Indian battle, so taking away any pleasure and exultation that the public might have been expected to feel at the victory. Two years later, when Hardinge was sent to quell disturbances in Ireland, Greville noted that Wellington did not think very highly of his military talents,

and moreover he thinks that on one occasion in India Hardinge committed a dangerous military blunder which Gough repaired; whereas all the world believes that Gough, though a very brave soldier, was a very inefficient commander, and that to Hardinge was attributable the success of the Sikh campaign.<sup>1</sup>

In October 1846 J. C. Hobhouse, the new president of the board of control, expressed his doubts to Lord John Russell as to whether the new Whig government would be justified in entrusting the direction of another campaign to Gough "or even to Hardinge." He distrusted the abilities of both

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<sup>1</sup>Greville's diary, 5 Aug. 1848. (Greville, 11, 341)

men where important commands were concerned and suggested that the prime minister canvass Wellington's opinion as to Hardinge's fitness to meet another Indian emergency.<sup>1</sup>

Implicit in these criticisms was the conviction felt by many observers that at Ferozeshah "the fate of India trembled in the balance." Hardinge himself told Havelock that "Another such action will shake the Empire,"<sup>2</sup> and during the crisis of the battle he told Currie to destroy all the state papers left at Mudki should the British army be defeated. Cunningham, on the other hand, though regarded as being "a perfect Sikh," thought that there was "no good reason for believing that one or two or even three defeats on the Sutlej would have shaken the stability of the British rule to the east and south of Delhi."<sup>3</sup> The armies and resources of Bombay and Madras had hardly been touched, and the Indian rulers lacked unity and were not ready to aid the Sikhs in overthrowing the British. The latter also had the advantages of homogeneity and discipline as well as great resources.

The shock felt at the proximity of defeat, and the potential magnitude of its consequences, lay behind the controversy - which has continued without resolution - over Gough's "Tipperary" tactics and Hardinge's interference in the battle.

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<sup>1</sup>Hobhouse to Russell, 10 Oct. 1846. (Gooch, G. P., The Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell, 1840-78, London 1925, 1, 274-5)

<sup>2</sup>Featherstone, Donald, At Them with the Bayonet!, London 1968, p. 89

<sup>3</sup>Cunningham, p. 269

There can be little doubt that the British had victory in their grasp when night fell on December 21 and that Hardinge was responsible for the delayed start to the attack. In his defense he wrote that when Littler joined Gough there was still time to defeat the Sikhs and that it was only the unexpectedly poor performance of the sepoys that had denied the British victory before nightfall. The governor-general was quite aware that darkness came particularly early on that day. According to his own and his son's accounts, after the two forces joined he rejected as impractical suggestions that the battle be deferred until the following day; "I then informed the Commander-in-Chief that there was day-light for an action, and he made his arrangements."<sup>1</sup>

It is impossible to say which of the two men was right since Gough was not allowed to put into effect his plan, while the course of action advocated by Hardinge was prejudiced by the unnecessarily delayed start to the battle and the sepoys' reluctance to fight.

Although for most of the seven weeks that elapsed between the battles of Ferozeshah and Sobraon Hardinge had his headquarters at Ferozepore while Gough was several miles away at Bootawala, the governor-general showered the latter with advice. "I must do him the justice to say that with an ardent temperament, great courage, and invincible fortitude he has

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge, C. S., p. 91

attended to my advice on all occasions," Hardinge wrote.<sup>1</sup>

The governor-general played a particularly prominent role in the planning that preceded the battle of Sobraon. For example, although he did not particularly favour a plan put forward by Hardinge, Gough was prepared to relinquish his own plan and adopt that of the governor-general: "The C. C. left the decision to me," Hardinge later told Peel.<sup>2</sup> On the morning of January 27 Hardinge rode down to the commander-in-chief's camp to discuss Smith's operations around Ludhiana and the possibility of storming the Sikh bridge-head at Sobraon. Gough proved "so extremely anxious" to attack the Sikhs that Hardinge returned to Ferozepore rather than give way to his request; he had no intention of crippling the army "without a reasonable prospect of capturing sixty or seventy guns."<sup>3</sup> On January 30 the governor-general spoke to Major Patrick Grant, the adjutant-general and Gough's son-in-law, hoping to impress upon him the need to have the means to follow up a victory - in other words the siege-guns on their way from Delhi - before an attack be made.

Hardinge sent the commander-in-chief a confidential letter on February 1 outlining a plan by which a force would cross the river at Ferozepore and take the Sikh position in reverse while the rest of the army launched a frontal attack

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 21 Mar. 1846. H. P. 1

<sup>2</sup>Ibid <sup>3</sup>Hardinge, C. S., p. 110

on the bridge-head. Gough objected that this would lay open his communications and Hardinge dropped the idea.

On February 7 Hardinge rode to the main camp to consult with Brigadier Brooke, of the artillery, and Captain Baker, an engineer, as to the advantages of attacking the enemy position with heavy artillery.

Both were convinced it would be impossible for the Enemy to remain 2 hours in his camp if exposed to the vertical fire of 30 pieces of Heavy Ordnance. Being very lame<sup>1</sup> I sent Col Benson to the CC to state my opinion that preparations should be immediately made to adopt this plan, . . .<sup>2</sup>

The governor-general added that Gough concurred in the idea of a bombardment and that "We both considered that plan as settled." The following day, however, the officers commanding the artillery and engineers changed their minds as to the feasibility of the plan. Nonetheless Hardinge left Gough on the clear understanding that an infantry attack unsupported by a heavy bombardment was out of the question. He suggested the commander-in-chief request written explanations from Brigadiers Gowan and Smith as to why they had reversed their original positions.

When Hardinge returned to Ferozepore he sent for Major Frederick Abbott, an engineer, in whose professional opinion he expressed great confidence, and outlined to him the controversy over the bombardment. Abbott, and later Major Lawrence, supported the governor-general's belief in the necessity for

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge had recently fallen from his horse.

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 21 Mar. 1846. H. P. 1

a bombardment of the Sikh camp. Hardinge notified Gough of these opinions and told him that "If, upon the fullest consideration, the Heavy artillery can be brought into play, I recommend you to attack. If it cannot, and you anticipate a heavy loss, I would recommend you not to undertake it."<sup>1</sup> When this letter was read to the artillery and engineer officers on the eve of the battle they changed their minds and gave their support to the artillery attack.

In the upshot the bombardment was relatively ineffective. Unaware of this Hardinge sent Colonel Benson to tell the commander-in-chief that if he doubted the result he was to postpone the attack, but if he only apprehended a heavy loss to go on. Benson apparently misinterpreted the message and told Gough that if he was not sure what the result might be he was to work up to the enemy lines by regular approaches. Unfortunately Benson repeated the same message twice more so that finally an irritated Gough ordered Sir Robert Dick to begin the attack.

Dick's initial assault was successful but, realizing that Gilbert's and Smith's attacks were feints, the Sikhs turned their full attention to his division, hurling it back. Thereupon the feints were turned into real attacks.

As we have heard many officers of those divisions express their belief that their advance was a mistake and not intended,

Edwardes wrote shortly after the battle,

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge, C. S., p. 115

it may not be out of place here to chronicle a curious fact, viz. that both the Chiefs, present in the field though in different parts of it, SIMULTANEOUSLY perceived the necessity of the manoeuvre, and SIMULTANEOUSLY ordered it.<sup>1</sup>

Hardinge further proved his usefulness by his orders to Littler and Grey at Ferozepore, to prepare the pontoon bridge and to have their troops ready to cross it and establish a bridgehead in the Punjab as soon as the Sikhs had been defeated.

Thus Hardinge was able to play the prominent role in the campaign that had been the object of his offering his services to Gough. His presence at the front was originally dictated by political reasons, but once there his instinct as a soldier made it difficult for him to resist the temptation actively to participate in the fighting. For this reason he should have remained well to the rear, as Dalhousie was later to do,<sup>2</sup> for example at Simla. His presence with, or in the immediate vicinity of, the army risked the safety of the governor-general and added a grave responsibility to those already undertaken by Gough. That the home government later approved of Hardinge's presence in the field - and was even prepared to give him a supplementary commission - in no way justifies his personal involvement in the campaign, and indicates a lamentable want of support for, and trust in, Gough.

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<sup>1</sup> Rait, Gough

<sup>2</sup> However Dalhousie also interfered in Gough's campaign when for three weeks he refused to allow the commander-in-chief to operate beyond the Chenab.



Hardinge was not simply establishing a precedent and relegating his commander-in-chief virtually to a subordinate role by his tactical interference at Ferozeshah, he was questioning the judgement of a highly experienced general who had soldiered in India and China for a number of years. In Asiatic warfare moral considerations weighed just as heavily as tactical ones. Gough understood this whereas Hardinge, with his staff training, his recent reading of Marmont, and his lack of experience in Indian warfare, did not. The question of whether or not Hardinge saved British dominion in India by insisting on Littler's participation in the attack is academic; the governor-general should not have been serving with the army.

VI. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CLIENT  
STATE, 1846

Wars have the effect of imposing a unity of purpose on the belligerents, whereas consensus as to the form a post-war settlement should take is usually much harder to find. Rarely do nations pursue a goal as fixedly as after 1871 the French sought to recover Alsace and Lorraine. It is no easy matter to find a compromise between the short-term needs of victory - the neutralization of the defeated nation's ability to menace the victor and the submission by it to various punitive measures including the payment of an indemnity - and the long-term requirements of continued peace, the return to some sort of power balance, and the re-establishment of conditions conducive to prosperity and stability. In its least subtle form this balance between the immediate and the future goals of the victor takes the form of outright annexation of all or part of the territory of the vanquished.

When he came to negotiate with the Durbar after Sohraon Hardinge found himself torn between the demand of many of his fellow-countrymen that he annex the Punjab, and his own belief that the interest of the British in India was best served by the presence on the north-west frontier of an independent Sikh state. Proponents of annexation warned of

the dire consequences of his failure to assimilate the Punjab into British India, and when, indeed, a second war broke out they assumed they had been proved right. What they failed to realize was that Hardinge did not, in fact, have a completely free hand to deal with the Punjab as he would have liked. But they were vocal in their theories and once again Hardinge found his policy with regard to the Sikhs a source of controversy.

At the end of September 1845 Hardinge told his stepson that if the Sikhs should force war upon him it would be made "without reservation of existing rights . . . If we interfere, let us have no half measures - let the advantages of B. justice in a mild administration of the Country be some compensation for the life of National Independence."<sup>1</sup>

Immediately after the British army entered the Punjab Hardinge reviewed his policy in a letter to the home government, and already it was clear that there was a dichotomy between his desire for a strong Sikh state and his fear that that state might again prove dangerous and aggressive. He explained how he hoped to weaken the Durbar by demanding a large indemnity, annexing a part of its territory, reducing its army, and arranging to make Gulab Singh independent of Lahore.

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Sir Walter James, 30 Sept. 1845. H. P.

This letter makes it clear that the threat of annexation, implicit in what Hardinge had told his stepson only a few months previously, was no longer an alternative he was seriously considering. In a proclamation issued on February 14 he assured the inhabitants of the Punjab that the war had not been undertaken by the Indian government "from any desire of territorial aggrandizement," although he warned the Sikhs that if they proved uncooperative he would make "other arrangements for the future government of the Punjaub."<sup>1</sup>

Nationalist historians have cited as evidence of Hardinge's desire to annex the Punjab his observation to Currie that "Personally I may regret that it has not been my fate to plant the B. standard on the banks of the Indus."<sup>2</sup> But, as he told Currie, he was consoled by the reflection that in taking the "less ambitious course" he had "acted right for the interests of England and of India." Although, as a statesman, Hardinge had to consider all the alternatives open to him, including annexation, he was not the man to allow soldierly ambition to influence his judgement in favour of a course he thought mistaken. He told Peel that "in the view I have always taken of this question, I cannot consider

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<sup>1</sup>Proclamation of 14 Feb. 1846. (The War in India)

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Currie, 16 Dec. 1846. (Mahajan, Jagmohan, Circumstances Leading to the Annexation of the Punjab, 1846-1849, Allahabad & Karachi 1949, p. 33)

it politic to annexe the Punjab if it can be avoided . . ."<sup>1</sup>  
His son, who was in the best possible position to know  
Hardinge's views, wrote that he was "deliberately averse to  
annexation, (although) he never disguised from himself that  
such a contingency might be forced upon him."<sup>2</sup> Palmerston,  
too, felt that Hardinge was "evidently against" British pos-  
session of the Punjab.<sup>3</sup>

Undoubtedly one of the factors that deterred Hardinge  
from annexing the Punjab was the military situation after  
Sobraon, which was not as favourable to the British as at  
first appeared. There were strong objections to continuing  
the campaign until the Sikhs had been reduced to the point  
where the Punjab could safely be annexed. The hot season,  
with its heat, its fatigue, and its danger to health, was ap-  
proaching. Twenty thousand Sikh troops, with thirty-five  
guns, still held together near Amritsar, and though these pre-  
sented no real danger in the field, Hardinge hoped to avoid  
"a protracted war of sieges." "On the 11th a very good of-  
ficer, Brigadier Irvine commanding Engineer,<sup>4</sup> came to me and  
entreated me not to advance on Lahore with the present siege  
means . . ." Hardinge wrote.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 21 Mar. 1846. H. P. 1

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge, C. S., p. 152

<sup>3</sup>Palmerston to Russell, 9 June 1847. (Ashley, Hon. Evelyn, The Life and Correspondence of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston, London, 1879, ii, 36)

<sup>4</sup>He had taken over from Brigadier Smith after Sobraon.

<sup>5</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 21 Mar. 1846. H. P. 1

Gough had under his command 24,115 men, of whom 4,424 were European, and even with the addition of the 12,000 men of Napier's command who were advancing from Bahawalpur, this force was inadequate for extensive siege operations. The army, and especially the European troops, was tired and had suffered well over 6000 casualties. Furthermore Hardinge complained that its discipline was as bad as it could possibly be. "It seems little of an exaggeration to say that Gough's soldiers had been fought to a standstill."<sup>1</sup>

The opinion of Hardinge and of several of his military advisers was that "annexation was absolutely impossible for want of force."<sup>2</sup> He wrote that Napier "entirely coincides in the Military difficulties of annexation and that we could only have attempted to execute such a plan had it been our true policy which it was not."<sup>3</sup>

Immediately after the battle of Sobraon the British made contact with the new Sikh prime minister, Gulab Singh. The wily Dogra chief had been called upon by the Durbar to head the government shortly after Ferozeshah and had initially refused. At the end of January he acceded to a second request that he undertake the leadership of the government and he immediately urged the Durbar to try and secure as honourable a peace as possible before it was too late. He quickly put out

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<sup>1</sup>Fortescue, xii, 390

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 21 Mar. 1846. H.P. 1

<sup>3</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 19 Mar. 1846. H. P. 1

peace feelers, but the British made disbandment of the Sikh army a pre-condition of negotiation, and to this Gulab Singh would not agree.

On February 11 Lawrence told Gulab Singh that though his government did not feel at all happy about the anarchic state of the Punjab and intended to punish the "rebels," the British still had "the same feeling and sympathy for the Lahore Durbar" as before, and wanted to show it forbearance.<sup>1</sup> In what may have been an attempt to divide the Durbar Lawrence sent Gulab Singh a cryptic and mysterious note on February 13 implying that it would be of advantage to the prime minister to make contact with him.

Gulab Singh arrived at the governor-general's camp on February 15 to negotiate the preliminary conditions for peace. While these discussions were going on Lawrence took Gulab Singh aside and, reminding him of the injuries he had suffered at the Durbar's hands, promised him the things he subsequently received by the treaty of Amritsar. According to one of his supporters Gulab Singh refused to negotiate about his own possessions while acting for the Durbar, and the matter was therefore dropped. However he was told that he would be suitably rewarded for not having participated in the war. The Sikh leaders who had been "as little obnoxious as possible to the English"<sup>2</sup> also escaped lightly.

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Lawrence to Gulab Singh, 11 Feb. 1846. (Pannikar, pp. 94-95)

<sup>2</sup> Hardinge to the Secret Committee, 19 Feb. 1846. (The War in India)

Gulab Singh accepted the British demands on the morning of February 17. These included the cession of the Jullundur Doab, the payment of a million and a half sterling, the surrender to the British of control over both the banks of the Sutlej, "and such other arrangements for settling the future boundaries of the Sikh State, and the organization of its administration as might be determined on at Lahore."<sup>1</sup> He also agreed to the disbandment of much of the Sikh army and the reorganization of what remained along the lines, and with the pay, obtaining in Ranjit Singh's time.

On the following day the army marched from Kasur and encamped at Luliani. The young Maharaja was brought into the camp but was not given the usual salute until he had thrown himself on Hardinge's mercy and his government had promised in his name the fulfilment of the British demands. On February 20 Gough's troops appeared before the walls of Lahore and Currie and Brigadier Cureton escorted Dhalip Singh from the camp to his palace. Two days later a part of the citadel was garrisoned by a British brigade, "To mark more plainly to the Indian world that a vaunting enemy had been effectually humbled."<sup>2</sup>

The treaty of Lahore, which amplified and formalized the preliminary conditions discussed at Kasur, was signed on

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid

<sup>2</sup> Hardinge to the Secret Committee, 4 Mar. 1846. (Featherstone, p. 155)



March 8, among the signatories being Lal Singh and Tej Singh, and was ratified the following day.<sup>1</sup> By it the Sikh government was to renounce all claim to the territories south of the Sutlej, as well as permanently ceding the Jullundur Doab.

Recognizing the difficulty Lahore would have in paying the indemnity the treaty required the cession to the Company of the provinces of Hazara and Kashmir, as a guarantee against its eventual payment. As it would have been difficult for the British actually to hold these territories an earlier idea that Gulab Singh be made the independent ruler of Jammu and Kashmir was revived, but this time with the rider attached that he pay the indemnity. This proposal had been put to the Durbar at the end of February and, according to one Sikh source, the Rani and her ministers had decided to try and raise the money rather than lose the two provinces, but had been foiled by the British insistence that the territory had already been offered to the Indian government.

The Sikh regular army was limited by the treaty to 25 regiments, each 800 strong, together with 12,000 cavalry. All the guns that were left to the Sikhs after Sobraon were to be surrendered. After due notice had been given British troops were to be allowed to cross the Punjab "for the protection of the British territories, or those of their allies . . ." and were to be helped by the Sikhs as far as possible.

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<sup>1</sup>For the terms of the treaty see Featherstone, pp. 186-8

Article XIV aimed at preventing a recurrence of Sikh expansionism by decreeing that the Sikh state could not change its territorial limits without British approval. By the penultimate provision of the treaty the Indian government promised that it would not interfere in the internal administration of the Punjab but offered to give advice in the interests of Lahore on all questions referred to it.

On March 15 Gulab Singh was recognized as Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, in return for which he acknowledged British suzerainty over the provinces. A formal treaty was signed at Amritsar the following day. Much stigma attached to Hardinge for selling Kashmir to a man alien in race and religion to the inhabitants in order to recover a relatively small indemnity.

Hardinge had long predicted the separation of the hills and the plains, and even looked upon their weakening each other with favour.<sup>1</sup> He thought that the creation of a Rajput dynasty in the hills, independent of Lahore and under British protection, would be the "least inconvenient mode of weakening the Sikh State."<sup>2</sup> Gulab Singh had been given

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Ellenborough, 23 Jan. 1845. (Broadfoot, pp. 274-6.) In judging Hardinge for trying to separate hill and plain, it should be noticed that the greatest of the Sikh rulers had himself resorted to a similar policy. Ranjit Singh, wrote Sir George Clerk, "fostered in the north of his kingdom a Rajpoot power, because it could have no affinity with his turbulent Khalsa on one side, or with malignant and vindictive Islam on the other" - Edwardes and Merivale, p. 388

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 21 Mar. 1846. H. P. 1

Kashmir "on the principle that it is our policy to prefer Hindoo Governments, or any other race in preference to the Mahommedans on this great entrance into India . . ."<sup>1</sup>

In the short term the transfer of Kashmir to Gulab Singh was of considerable benefit to British interests. He undoubtedly realized that his position as the ruler of one of the most important frontier states of India could only be maintained with British help, and that were the Company's hold on India to be weakened he would be among the first to suffer.

In the second Sikh war he rejected Sikh appeals for help and instead offered his support to the Company. Although the British regarded him with suspicion, Gulab Singh was requested to close and guard the passes and to send an army to fight the Sikhs. Accordingly the boundaries of Kashmir were closed and a strong force was sent to Lahore with instructions to act under John Lawrence's orders. In 1857 Ranbir Singh, the son of Gulab Singh, led 2000 Kashmiri troops to Delhi where they suffered heavy casualties in helping the British storm the city.

Before the treaty of Lahore was signed Lawrence received a letter signed by the Maharaja asking that a British force be left at Lahore for a limited period. Hardinge asked that this request be made in writing and Currie notified the Durbar of the amendments the Indian government wanted incorporated in the text. The revised request duly stated the "earnest and

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 19 Mar. 1846. H. P. 1

sincere desire of the Darbar that British troops with intelligent officers should, for some months, as circumstances seemed to require, be left at Lahore for the protection of the Maharaja and his Government."<sup>1</sup>

The Sikh desire for troops to be left at Lahore was not entirely unexpected. On February 19 Hardinge wrote that he intended to leave Napier in command "If we are obliged to keep a force at Lahore for a few months, until a Sikh Army be re-organized . . ."<sup>2</sup> However, a fortnight later he wrote that he expected to sign the treaty in a few days and withdraw the army as he had not been asked, and did not desire, to leave a garrison in the Sikh capital.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, within a week of saying this Hardinge announced at the ratification of the treaty that British troops would be stationed at Lahore till the end of the year.

The British, with painful memories of the Kabul disaster, had no desire to leave troops in Lahore. Gough told his son that "Hardinge himself was much opposed to it, and positively refused the repeated solicitations of the Sikh Government."<sup>4</sup> Gough strongly disapproved of stationing troops in the city, partly on grounds of health, and partly

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge, C. S., p. 126

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 19 Feb. 1846. H. P. i

<sup>3</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 4 Mar. 1846. H. P. i

<sup>4</sup>Gough to his son, G. S. Gough, 15 Mar. 1846. (Featherstone, p. 159)

because he felt that the Sikh government was too weak for the treaty long to remain in effect. The governor-general put as brave a face on matters as he could:

I have explained the necessity and limited the period. It is a responsibility I must incur in sincerely attempting to re-establish a Sikh Government having always been of opinion, that the Ruler of the Punjab must be either Sikh or British.<sup>1</sup>

He thought that a disaster involving these troops was unlikely, even if the experiment of bolstering the Sikh government failed.

Hardinge's decision to leave troops in Lahore meant that he had in effect adopted, however unwillingly, and temporarily, a form of relationship between the two governments which he disliked, that of the subsidiary alliance.<sup>2</sup> This was a practice much used in Company rule in India and involved the maintenance of the existing native government with troops levied by the Indian government but paid for by the allied state.

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 21 Mar. 1846. H. P. 1

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge himself felt that the occupation of Lahore in March 1846 could not be regarded a part of a subsidiary arrangement since Littler's instructions stated that his troops were intended to keep order in the capital and were not to be employed outside the city (Hardinge to the secret committee, 19 Sept. 1846. British Sessional Papers, 1847, xli, 183). However the preservation of order in Lahore was essential to the maintenance of the government, and the presence there of British troops might therefore be regarded as part of a subsidiary alliance.

The subsidiary system may have been politic and wise at the time it was introduced,

Hardinge wrote three months before the outbreak of war,

but you have only to look to the Carnatic, Mysore, Hyderabad and Oude as strong illustrations of the impolicy of that system, and which on the extreme frontier of the Empire by the only road which divides India from the Mahomedans of<sup>1</sup> the N. West would be quite impracticable.

Hardinge felt that subsidiary alliances were productive of an ambiguous authority unconducive to good government in the states subject to them. He was afraid that its use in the Punjab would inevitably lead to an insurrection, which would require British intervention. The governor-general wanted to foster the establishment of a strong and friendly government that was independent of British support without being a menace, something akin to the Punjab when it was under Ranjit Singh's rule, though militarily less of a threat to Indian security.

Hardinge's policy was epitomized in a letter to Peel of 17 February 1846 which also demonstrated his belief that the Muslims were the chief threat to the north-west frontier:

I believe for the true interests of India it is safer to have a Hindoo Government on this Frontier able to defend itself from the Mahomedans on the Indus, but no longer able to march on Delhi . . . if the Sikhs when re-established cannot maintain their national institutions and be good neighbours to the paramount power of India, I am satisfied in one campaign we can annex the whole country - but annexation would lead to most serious evils and as the Subsidiary

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 8 Sept. 1845. H. P. 1

System is rejected by all parties I can only express my hope that the line I have <sup>1</sup> taken will be approved by H. M. Government.

Hardinge told Henry Lawrence, who was the first Resident at Lahore, that he must assure the Durbar that

whilst we do not desire the annexation of the Punjab to the British Indian possessions, the Government is determined not to lend itself to any subsidiary system, and as soon as its troops are withdrawn will decline to interfere in the internal affairs of the Sikh State, except by such friendly councils as those which passed between the two Governments in the time of the Maharajah Runjeet Singh.<sup>2</sup>

There was one other course that Hardinge could have taken. He told Peel that he "could have destroyed the Sikh nation as a Frontier power by dividing it into 4 tributary states."<sup>3</sup> Amplifying this idea in a later letter Hardinge made it clear that had the Punjab been partitioned, each of the districts, while being independent of each other, would be subject to British rule. He rejected this plan on account of the confusion and strife it would have engendered and the opportunity it would have afforded the Muslims of recovering their former power, "especially on the Indus."<sup>4</sup>

During the remainder of his period of office Hardinge presented the treaty of Lahore in several different

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 19 Feb. 1846. H. P. 1

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Henry Lawrence, 11 Mar. 1846. (Edwardes and Merivale, p. 386)

<sup>3</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 19 Feb. 1846. H. P. 1

<sup>4</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 21 Mar. 1846. H. P. 1

lights, thus making it very difficult to ascertain exactly what were his intentions in framing it. Initially he congratulated himself on having taken an intermediate course between annexation and a complete return to the status quo:

I believe the policy of maintaining a Sikh Government if it be possible to be the best, and I have left the Lahore Government quite strong enough to maintain its power over any neighbouring State or the Mahommedan population if it attempts to rise. It was however absolutely necessary to punish the Sikhs and weaken their power to repeat the invasion.<sup>1</sup>

He was the more anxious to punish the Sikhs as he felt that all Asia was watching and would misconstrue a generous peace as an admission of British weakness.

Hardinge was at first optimistic that he would accomplish his objective of leaving the Sikh government strong enough for it to be able to countervail Muslim ambitions on the north-west frontier without being so powerful as once again to constitute a menace to the Indian government. But at the end of March 1846 he wrote despairingly that the lack of able leaders among the Sikhs seriously undermined the chances of survival of the Durbar.

Hardinge realized that although Peel had approved "the wisdom of the conditions imposed with reference . . . to the permanent interests of the Indian Empire . . ."<sup>2</sup> his decision not to annex the Punjab would be unpopular at home and

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 19 Mar. 1846. H. P. i

<sup>2</sup>Peel to Hardinge, April 1846 (Hardinge, C. S., p. 143)



with the army and the civil service in India. He therefore went to some lengths to justify his failure to do so, at the same time claiming that the situation he left in the Punjab was tantamount to a "partial annexation." In 1847 he told Peel that he was collecting

some curious details of the Punjab which as far as they go tend to prove that the Country is not worth having, that it would lie at present a heavy pressure on our finances, and (that it would be) for the future a very doubtful acquisition. Annexation in its present shape is less onerous and more free from responsibility . . . A Hindoo Government prevents many inconvenient collisions with Afghanistan and tribes on that frontier . . .<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand he reminded Lawrence in October 1847 that

In all our measures taken during the minority (of Dhalip Singh) we must bear in mind that by the Treaty of Lahore, March 1846, the Punjaub was never intended to be an independent State. By the clause I added, the Chief of the State can neither make war nor peace, nor exchange nor sell an acre of territory, nor admit a European officer, nor refuse us a thoroughfare through his territories, nor, in fact, perform any act (except its own internal administration) without our permission . . . I advert hastily to this point because, if I have any difference of opinion with you, it consists in your liberality in attempting at too early a period to train the Sikh authorities to walk alone; I wish them to feel and to like our direct interference by the benefits conferred.<sup>2</sup>

The limitations on Sikh independence mentioned here by the governor-general principally affected the Punjab in its external relations. Those aspects of Sikh sovereignty

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 5 April 1847. H. P. 1

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Henry Lawrence, 23 Oct. 1847. (Edwardes and Merivale, p. 417)

which were not inimical to British security he intended to restore to the Sikh government as soon as was practicable. Hardinge told Lawrence to help the Durbar to re-organize its army "on the safest system for the permanence of the Sikh Government, doing everything in your power to ensure the success of this trial of re-establishing a Sikh Government, which may eventually carry on its functions without British aid or interference."<sup>1</sup> Whatever he might say to appease the annexationists, Hardinge was well aware that the situation brought about by the treaty possessed one of the great advantages of annexation - the neutralization of a powerful enemy - while it obviated the expense<sup>2</sup> and inconvenience of actual occupation.

The Army of the Punjab, as Gough had re-christened his force, was soon chafing to return to India, and on March 23 Thackwell left the neighbourhood of Lahore with the bulk of the army, leaving Littler with 10,000 men to garrison the Sikh capital and form a mobile column. There were also mobile columns at Ferozepore and at Julundur, of 6292 men and 12 guns and 5395 men and 12 guns respectively.

Hardinge himself did not stay long in Lahore after the signing of the treaty, thinking it "more becoming a G. G. . . . not to linger amongst the fallen Sikhs."<sup>3</sup> He set

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Henry Lawrence, 11 Mar. 1846. (Edwardes and Merivale, p. 386)

<sup>2</sup>It was estimated that annexation of the Punjab would cost the Indian government one million sterling annually in excess of the probable revenue.

<sup>3</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 19 Mar. 1846. H. P. i

out for Simla at the end of March, with the intention of crossing the Jullundur Doab "and after seeing every post with my own eyes make such a disposition of the posts and forces as shall secure our Frontier . . ."<sup>1</sup> His aim was to keep twenty-eight infantry battalions, sixteen cavalry regiments and 60 guns as well as heavy ordnance on the frontier, besides reinforcing the interior with a strong force of infantry, cavalry, and artillery. The total strength on the north-west frontier on 1 July 1846 was 42,052 men and 94 guns.

On 1 April 1846 the governor-general appointed Major Henry Lawrence agent for the north-west frontier and Resident at Lahore, while John Lawrence was made commissioner for the newly-annexed Jullundur Doab. Other British officers were posted at strategic points in the Punjab, officially so as to help Sikh administrators in the discharge of their duties. They were to act as friendly advisers but, except for George Lawrence at Peshawar, who was given wider powers because of the strategic importance of his post, were told not to interfere directly unless justice could not otherwise be obtained.

Henry Lawrence was always accessible and soon knew by name, character, and history the leading sardars, and day by day accumulated information concerning the country, its resources, its army and its politics, on which subjects little was hitherto known in India. Lawrence was a Company servant

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 19 Feb. 1846. H. P. 1

of the old type who believed that the native peoples were happier under their own rulers, however inept, than they would be under the rule of the Indian government. He felt that if a subsidiary alliance could not be avoided the Resident should have "the discretion and good feeling to keep himself in the background."<sup>1</sup> His appointment was therefore indicative of a sincere desire on Hardinge's part that the Sikh government should have a genuine chance to re-establish itself.

Lawrence's custom was to send out his officers "on visits of a week or a month to different quarters (in order that) we may help the executive as well as protect the people."<sup>2</sup>

What days those were!

wrote one of these men.

How Henry Lawrence would send us off to great distances: Edwardes to Bunnoo, Nicholson to Peshawar, Abbott to Hazara, Lumsden to somewhere else, etc., giving us a tract of country as big as half of England, and giving us no more helpful directions than these, 'settle the country; make the people happy; and take care there are no rows!'"<sup>3</sup>

These British officials achieved a great deal in their efforts to regularize the administration of the areas in which they worked.

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<sup>1</sup>Thompson, Edward, and Garratt, G.T., Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India, Allahabad 1958, p. 338

<sup>2</sup>Trotter, L. J., The Life of John Nicholson, London 1898, p. 69

<sup>3</sup>Memorials of the Life and Letters of Major-General Sir Herbert B. Edwardes, by his wife, London 1886, i, 58

The whole country has been surveyed and the system of taxation laid down on fixed principles; the fiscal and excise systems had been readjusted, and oppressive duties and Government monopolies of all sorts abolished,

one observer wrote of the results of British administration in the Punjab up to the end of 1847.

A census had been made, and the population and trades of Lahore determined; and the Durbar had sanctioned the outlay of £30,000 on roads and bridges, to be increased to £60,000 when the state of the country allowed.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, able as these officers were, they were usually sent to outlying areas of the country, among people subdued by the Sikhs who regarded the Englishmen as their protectors against the exactions of the authorities at Lahore. It was, therefore, hard for these men to realize the feelings nurtured by the Khalsa and the Sikh people, and successful as they often were in their specific missions, the real feelings in the Punjab remained hidden. Similarly, senior British officials such as Lawrence dealt mostly with those Sikh rulers who, if they had not betrayed their people, had shown themselves indifferent towards or even afraid of them.

The problem facing Henry Lawrence admitted of no easy solution. He found the treasury empty and the privileged classes solid against reforms. To have supported the old ruling class without making an effort to alleviate the position of the peasants would have associated the British

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<sup>1</sup>Buist's Annals of India, 1848. Cited in Edwardes, Memorials, 1, 82

with the Durbar's misrule in the eyes of the majority. On the other hand outright support for the masses against the landowners would have so weakened the state as to make the experiment in the re-establishment of the Sikh government worthless.

Lawrence genuinely tried to temper sympathy for the down-trodden with consideration for those his reforms injured; he felt that the British had a duty to raise the moral character of the ruling classes. But inevitably there was considerable discontent and Hardinge warned Lawrence to beware of those chiefs excluded from power who might intrigue against the government and try to stir up trouble among the troops. Nonetheless, in an essay he wrote in December 1847 for the "Calcutta Review," Lawrence remarked that

The Sikhs have come to terms, and settled down, because they have been well treated by us; because scarcely a single jaghire in the country has been resumed, and because the rights and even prejudices of all classes have been respected.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout 1846 there were disturbances in the Punjab. In late April there was a riot over the action of an English sentry in slashing at some cows that were causing an obstruction. Lawrence was pelted with stones and ordered stern reprisals against the ring-leaders of the disturbance.

In May the Resident himself led a small expedition to reduce the fort of Kangra, which had fired on a party

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<sup>1</sup>Edwardes and Merivale, p. 385

under Lieutenant Cunningham. Hardinge wanted Lawrence to leave the negotiations for the surrender of the fort entirely to Diwan Dina Nath, who accompanied the force, so that the appearance would be maintained of the Durbar regulating its own affairs. But the Diwan's negotiations were unavailing and accordingly Lawrence, by great exertions, brought up some heavy guns, whereupon the garrison capitulated. This brought a mild rebuke from Hardinge who noted that as things stood it seemed as if Lawrence's action had terminated the negotiations before Diwan Dina Nath had had an adequate chance to effect a surrender.<sup>1</sup>

Despite these outbreaks the governor-general was relatively optimistic about the situation in the Punjab, and he told Peel in June that the British were popular with the people for having substituted order for chaos. On September 3 he told the secret committee that

if the selfish views and combinations of the Chiefs against the Government can admit of a compromise, and a regular system of paying the army should be adopted, I see no cause why a permanent Sikh Government may not be established.<sup>2</sup>

However Hardinge realized that the real test of the viability of the Sikh government would be the withdrawal of the British garrison when it would be seen whether or not the new Sikh

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Lawrence, 27 May 1846. (Edwardes and Merivale, pp. 393-4)

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to the secret committee, 3 Sept. 1846. (British Sessional Papers, 1847, xli, 180)

army was reconciled to its reduced pay and its loss of independence.<sup>1</sup>

The most important test of the Durbar's willingness to abide by the treaty occurred in Kashmir. Lahore's governor there, Shaikh Imam-ud-din, had ignored the order sent to him to hand the province over to Gulab Singh. On hearing the news in mid-September Hardinge immediately declared that the treaty must be enforced by British troops. Currie told Lawrence that the Indian government intended holding the Durbar responsible for the acts of their official in this violation of the treaty.

On 15 September 1846 Hardinge ordered a British force to be ready to move fully equipped for field service towards Jammu under Brigadier Wheeler. The Durbar was asked to put at Gulab Sing's disposal one-half to two-thirds of its forces at the stations between the Ravi and Attock. Even more galling for them, the Sikh commanders in this area were directed to act on the instructions of the man who had profited by their recent defeat. In addition Lawrence set out from Lahore with approximately 10,000 Sikh troops.

On September 17 Lieutenant Edwardes, the British adviser to Gulab Singh, reported that one of the Shaikh's confidants, Puran Chand, had accused Lal Singh of having privately instructed Imam-ud-din to resist the transfer of the province. Currie told Lawrence that if Lal Singh's complicity

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 7 June 1846. H. P. 1



was proved and the Shaikh ended his resistance his safety would be assured. The refractory governor, concerned for his estates in the Jullundur, wavered. On October 6 additional British troops were ordered to move into the Punjab, and five days later Wheeler was instructed to push his field force to Bhimbar. Gradually the Shaikh's resistance crumbled; Edwardes assured him that the Durbar would not be allowed to call him to account and that he would be permitted to keep his property in Kashmir. Currie deprecated this promise but the governor-general had no choice but to approve the terms on condition that the charges made against Lal Singh be proved. On October 31 the Shaikh made his submission and the British troops were soon ordered to withdraw. The Sikh troops, unwilling as they were to support Gulab Singh, drew warm commendations from Hardinge for their conduct.

The governor-general deputed Currie and Lawrence to investigate the parts played in the revolt by the Shaikh and by Lal Singh. The campaign had shown a revival of Sikh morale and discipline, and the conviction of the Lahore government for a serious breach of the treaty might have had serious consequences. Since he had reason to believe that Lal Singh's action had been motivated by a hatred of Gulab Singh and was not part of a plot to violate the treaty, Hardinge was not anxious to hold the Durbar responsible for the misconduct of one or more individuals. The vazir's associates in the government either were, or pretended to be, ignorant of any treasonable correspondence.

A public court of inquiry, presided over by Currie and consisting of four other British officers, opened on 3 December 1846. Hardinge told Currie that the investigation was to be so conducted as to prevent there being any suspicions as to the fairness of its findings. The evidence of three letters sent by Lal Singh to the Shaikh was enough to incriminate the former, but Hardinge asked only that the vazir be removed from office, and the ministers and chiefs readily concurred. In order to prevent any disruption of public business that might follow Lal Singh's deposition the powers of government were temporarily vested in a council of four.

Even after her favourite's dismissal the Rani still outwardly favoured the retention of the British garrison in Lahore. At a meeting of the Rani and the leading ministers on 10 September 1846, she reported that the unanimous conclusion of the members of the Durbar whom she had consulted when apprised of Hardinge's desire to withdraw the garrison, was that the "existence of the government, indeed of her own life and that of the maharajah, solely depended on its presence and that of the British representative in Lahore." She added that "if the army only stayed the Durbar would agree to any terms which the English government should think proper to impose."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Khushwant Singh, ii, 59. John Lawrence was present at this meeting.

Hardinge had himself been thinking along similar lines for some little time. On September 10 he had written to the secret committee discussing the advisability of carrying on "the government of Lahore during (Dhalip Singh's) minority . . . placing a British Minister at the head of the government assisted by a Native Council." He felt that a more direct British rule would provide justice and moderation and avoid the danger of the Indian government being regarded as the associate of an unpopular government over which it had in fact no control.

If, therefore, the proposal of the Regent and Darbar should lead to an offer to carry on the government by a British Minister, and the proposal should be confirmed by the influential chiefs, I should be disposed to<sup>1</sup> give the experiment a favourable consideration.

In late November Hardinge told his step-son that although the Punjab was tranquil, the misgovernment at Lahore was so flagrant that he intended either to "withdraw the troops altogether or insist upon a better system of Government."<sup>2</sup> He would probably at this stage have preferred the first alternative for he had told his step-son in a previous letter that he felt himself bound in honour to see the troops withdrawn before he could think of leaving India. In mid-September he had told another correspondent that he intended

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to the secret committee, 10 Sept. 1846. (Hardinge, C. S., pp. 149-50)

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Sir Walter James, 21 Nov. 1846. H. P. iv

to "withdraw the B. garrison from Lahore (by) the end of December."<sup>1</sup> Then in December he wrote that Lal Singh's conviction "strengthens the necessity of our refusing to have British troops in Lahore under a native Government." He added that the vazir's intrigues against a government which protected him was strongly illustrative of the impolicy of the subsidiary system.<sup>2</sup>

Thus when he learned of the Durbar's desire that Littler's troops remain at Lahore he began to lean strongly towards the alternative of a more active British participation in the government of the Punjab.

It was repeated to them that his Lordship would be best pleased could they assure him of their ability to carry on the government alone, unsupported except by the sincere friendship of the British. But if they thought this was impossible, and called on the Governor-General to interfere and actively assist them, they must understand that his interference would be complete, i.e., he would occupy Lahore or any other part of the Punjab with what force he thought advisable; a stipulated sum of money being paid monthly into the British treasury for the expenses of the same; and further, that the whole civil and military administration of the Punjab would be subject to the supervision of a British Resident though conducted by the Durbar and executive officers appointed by them. This arrangement was to hold good till the majority of the young Maharajah when the British troops would retire from the Punjab and the British Government recognize its perfect independence.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Col. Thomas Wood (?), 12 Sept. 1846. H. P.

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Currie, 6 Dec. 1846. (Ganda Singh, p. 10)

<sup>3</sup>Henry Lawrence's official report. (Michael Edwardes, p. 107)

Early in December Hardinge returned to the Punjab and distributed watches among influential men many of whom could not read the time. At the same time, knowing the vulnerability of the Rani and the sardars once the protection of British troops had been withdrawn, he began trying to manoeuvre them into asking for a continuation of the occupation of Lahore. He was particularly anxious that such a proposal should appear to emanate from the sardars themselves, for much as they might want the retention of Littler's garrison, they would naturally prefer to disguise the fact from their people. Hardinge remarked on December 14 that

The coyness of the Durbar and the sirdars is natural; but it is very important that the proposal should originate with them, and in any documents proceeding from them this admission must be stated in clear and unqualified terms; our reluctance to undertake a heavy responsibility must be set forth.<sup>1</sup>

Two days previously the governor-general had confided to Currie that to achieve this object he would give the Durbar "a hint" that the garrison was about to leave, and he confidently predicted that such a hint would "accelerate the Durbar decision."<sup>2</sup> On December 14 Hardinge asked Currie "to desire Sir John Littler to move all the troops out of Lahore (at) the end of the week," but added that if "this hint should be unnecessary by the temper of the Chiefs to

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Currie, 14 Dec. 1846. (Mahajan, pp. 64-5)

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Currie, 12 Dec. 1846. (Mahajan, p. 64)

assent to our views, it will not be made."<sup>1</sup> As a further inducement to the sardars Hardinge proposed that in return for the loss of most of their political power their social and economic position should be guaranteed; he thought that this would be "a powerful stimulus."

The Rani, whose public professions were on the side of retaining the garrison and whose private views on the question seem to have been undecided, tried to withstand the pressure, supported only by Diwan Dina Nath. Eventually, as a compromise, the Durbar decided to ask Hardinge to allow the Resident and two native infantry regiments, one regiment of light cavalry, and one battery to stay "for some months, during which, what still remains to be done to complete the organization of the government in an efficient manner may be effected."<sup>2</sup> The governor-general considered this proposal so absurd as to be tantamount to the expression of a desire on the part of the Sikhs that they manage their own affairs without British interference. Hardinge reiterated his determination not to allow a British garrison to be used in support of an inefficient and corrupt Sikh administration.<sup>3</sup>

The sardars, in particular Sher Singh, were by now intimidated and began to disclaim any participation in the composition of the Maharaja's letter. On December 15 the

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Currie, 14 Dec. 1846. (Mahajan, pp. 64-5)

<sup>2</sup>Dhalip Singh to Currie, 14 Dec. 1846. (Mahajan, pp. 65-6)

<sup>3</sup>Hardinge to Currie, 14 Dec. 1846. (Mahajan, pp. 66-7)

British terms were presented to the Sikhs, laying down "the only conditions" on which the governor-general would consent to a modification of the arrangements of the previous March, besides providing for the retention of British troops in Lahore. The sardars unanimously agreed to everything except the amount of the Sikh contribution towards the cost of the garrison, which was therefore reduced from twenty-four to twenty-two lakhs of rupees annually. By December 16 the negotiations were concluded and the treaty was ratified by Dhalip Singh and Hardinge at the latter's camp at Bhairawal ten days later.

The treaty of Bhairawal was to remain in force until either the Maharaja reached the age of sixteen - which was not until 4 September 1854 - or sooner if the governor-general was satisfied that British support was no longer needed to maintain the Sikh government. All the articles of the earlier treaty remained in full force except for Article XV, which prevented British interference in the internal administration of the Lahore state. The new governing force in the Punjab was to be an eight-member council of regency, acting "under the control and guidance of the British Resident" whose power extended "over every department, and to any extent." The Durbar was still free to appoint officials, but the Rani was deprived of all power - in Hardinge's view this was an indispensable condition of any agreement - and was pensioned off with one and a half lakhs per annum. The

governor-general was empowered to occupy with British troops such positions as he thought necessary "for the security of the capital or for maintaining the peace of the country."<sup>1</sup>

Hardinge spelled out the implications of the treaty when he reported to the secret committee that "by these arrangements, I take under my direct control the executive administration of these districts and am desirous before I leave this part of the country to introduce in these territories an effective system of administration . . ."<sup>2</sup>

Hardinge was even more explicit when he told Hobhouse, the new president of the board of control whom he regarded as more inclined to a forward policy on the frontier than was Ripon, that "if the annexation be desirable, the country would lose nothing, particularly in the state of our finances, by waiting till the PEAR IS RIPE." He added, however, that his belief in the impolicy of annexation was entirely based on his sincere conviction of the necessity for a policy of moderation.<sup>3</sup> Hardinge was later to argue that all the elements of treason and violence that appeared under the existing system would have been still more pronounced had direct

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<sup>1</sup>Khushwant Singh, ii, 334-7

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to the secret committee, 16 Dec. 1846. (Khushwant Singh, ii, 60)

<sup>3</sup>Hardinge to Hobhouse, 21 Jan. 1847. (Hasrat, p. 296)  
Hardinge admitted that the experience of Sind made him cautious over Punjab affairs.



annexation, with its final deprivation of the chiefs' political power, been imposed.

Although the governor-general thought that annexation was the "favourite policy" of the Liberal ministry, the home authorities had told him that he would be left

at leisure to consider the state of affairs at Lahore, and to determine the important question of remaining in or quitting the Punjab. You are in possession of our sentiments on the subject.<sup>1</sup> But let me again say that we leave the decision to you, who are on the spot with all the materials for forming a correct judgment immediately before you; and also that,<sup>2</sup> do what you may, you will be supported by us.

It seems that this pledge was honoured for in April 1847 Hardinge wrote to thank the government for the honourable support he had received, and told his stepson of their "cordial approbation" of his conduct.

Within four months of ratifying the treaty Hardinge was tacitly to admit that one of the premises on which British interest in the Punjab was based no longer was valid. He reported that the Russians posed less of a threat than in the past since a modern army with a well-equipped field-train of artillery would have difficulty in the mountainous country

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<sup>1</sup>The board of directors told Hardinge: "We have already conveyed to you our approbation of your project for establishing a British regency in the Punjab, in case you should determine not to evacuate the country. No middle course would be either prudent or safe; and our dominion, so long as it lasts, should be absolute and complete" - Khushwant Singh, 11, 60

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge, C. S., p. 151

on the north-west frontier. For Russia to assemble an adequate force would take time and could not be disguised; this would give the British time to prepare and the choice of where to meet the enemy. Besides, Hardinge boasted, "we have now 50,000 men and 100 field pieces, and 100 siege guns, with 500 rounds a gun, on this frontier."

If the Indus had turned out to be a navigable river,

he continued,

and (if) our military communications for troops and stores could have been secured from Kurrahee by the Indus, the Punjaub would have been of some military value; but that route has failed us, and there is no real military communication between this frontier and Scinde. However, I won't enter into the question of the annexation of the Punjaub.<sup>1</sup>

Although this was a view endorsed by Wellington it did not convince Palmerston who had a low opinion of Hardinge's judgement.

The treaties of Lahore and Bhairawal, which effectively gave the Company control of the Punjab while maintaining the façade of a Sikh government, owed more in their formulation to the pressure of events than to a calculated forward policy on Hardinge's part. In fact he continued to cling to his hope that with judicious British support the Durbar might re-establish its authority. Although it is probable that Hardinge would gladly have left the Punjab largely to itself had a strong and capable government been found, the events

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<sup>1</sup>Memorandum by Hardinge, 20 April 1847 (Ashley, ii, 38-9)

of 1846 eroded his original optimism as to the possibility of this. Yet instead of finding an alternative to the policy of revivifying the Sikh government - either by outright annexation or by insisting on governmental reforms aimed at halting the increasing isolation of the Durbar from the people and thus rendering unnecessary British interference - Hardinge did not abandon his "experiment."

At all events towards the close of 1846 he decided to continue the British occupation of Lahore in order to support his Sikh protégés, but without intending to become associated in the maladministration of a government over which his power of restraint was limited. He therefore sought in the treaty of Bhairowal to bring the Punjab effectively under British control without incurring the inconvenience of annexation. As long as the Sikhs were not an active threat to Indian security Hardinge felt that seizure of their country would be more a drain on British resources than a strategic asset. By limiting direct Company involvement in the rule of the Punjab to the period of Dhalip Singh's minority it was probably his hope that seven years of British tutelage would restore the Durbar's capacity and will to govern.

## VII. THE FAILURE OF HARDINGE'S "EXPERIMENT,"

1847-8

Annexation, whether real or in the guise of a protectorate, places an enormous administrative, economic, and military burden on the government that attempts it. When the territory involved is permanently ceded its administration can, however, be gradually absorbed into that of the annexing power with perhaps some allowance being made for local traditions and methods. But where one state exercises control over the affairs of another without actually incorporating it within its own territories, and intends to restore partial or total independence in due course, the local administration is less likely to be completely remodelled or its personnel entirely supplanted. In such a case the more or less brief importation of alien administrative practices usually parallels the operation of the native bureaucracy and its influence depends on the quality of the expatriate officials involved.

Although Bhairawal heightened British control over the Punjab there could be no question of completely reforming the Sikh administration or replacing its officials. Through Currie Hardinge told Lawrence that "Our position is not that

of active agents, but of friendly advisers, with the power, where necessary, of enforcing our advice, and, when justice cannot otherwise be obtained, of directly acting ourselves; but this must be the last resort." It was left to the Resident's judgement how far he should intervene in the governing of the Punjab. With the object of facilitating good government Lawrence was told that it would be "politic" for him to work with the concurrence of the council of regency, but he was also reminded that its members were entirely under his control and guidance - if he wished he could remove them and appoint others. Normally, Currie added, these wide powers would be useful in proportion to the moderation with which they were exercised.<sup>1</sup>

Lawrence reported that on the whole the Durbar and the chiefs gave him as much support as he could reasonably expect, although there had been "a quiet struggle for mastery." However, the members of the council were "gradually falling into the proper train, and refer most questions to me, and, in words at least, allow, more fully even than I wish, that they are only executive officers, to do as they are bid."<sup>2</sup>

It was Hardinge's hope that the advantages of efficient and mild administration on the part of the Company officials

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<sup>1</sup>The Secretary with the governor-general to Henry Lawrence, 3 July 1847. (British Sessional Papers, 1849, xli, 56, No. 6, enclosure 8)

<sup>2</sup>Henry Lawrence to the secretary with the governor-general, 2 Aug. 1847. (British Sessional Papers, 1849, xli, p. 70, No. 8, enclosure 2)

sent to the Punjab would to some extent reconcile the inhabitants to their loss of independence. Rarely in the history of British India was found a group of men more suited to the task confronting them than "Lawrence's young men." The work these subalterns had begun before the treaty of Bhairawal was extended and their authority was increased, but at the same time the Resident exercised supervision over them.

Death by hanging had just been introduced into the Punjab, and it became an integral part of the rough and ready system of justice used very effectively by these officers to restore order and stability. In one night's work Edwardes produced a legal code for the people of Bannu and single-handedly he began administering it. However, a rigid system of recording and the right of appeal prevented the considerable judicial power wielded by the political assistants from being used too arbitrarily. The collection of the revenue was as shorn of elaboration as was the administration of justice, but a start was made on the enormous task of surveying the country in order to produce an accurate assessment. The urgency of their work made each of Lawrence's assistants a combination of political adviser, judge, legislator, tax-gatherer, financier, and engineer. "We have agreed," wrote John Lawrence, "not to recommend any leave unless men are sick. There is still much to do . . . Every day is of value and the best officer cannot work too hard or too long for the public interest."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Woodruff, i, 324

The efforts and the great personal prestige of the handful of officer-politicals went far towards effecting the peaceful settlement desired by Hardinge. But there remained two major obstacles to the achievement of that goal, the Rani and the Sikh army. As early as the day following the agreement of terms at Bhairawal Lawrence reported that the queen mother had been endeavouring "to win the Sardars to a scheme of independent government of which she herself was to be the head."<sup>1</sup> The Resident went on to describe her as "the only effective enemy to our policy that I know of in the Country."<sup>2</sup>

In February 1847 the "Prema conspiracy," an attempt to assassinate Lawrence and Tej Singh, was unearthed. However, the evidence was too circumstantial to implicate the "Hindu Messalina" in the plot. She began again to participate in affairs of state, and her influence over the people as a widow of Ranjit Singh was so great that the British authorities became increasingly perturbed, particularly after the discovery that the Rani's slave-companion was carrying incriminating messages to Lal Singh and to Diwan Mulraj, the governor of Multan.

Then, at a grand durbar on 7 August 1847, the young Maharaja refused to confer a title on Tej Singh, and "shrunk back in his velvet chair, with a determination foreign both to his age and gentle disposition," so Lawrence reported to

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<sup>1</sup>Majumdar, R. C. (ed.), The History and Culture of the Indian People, Bombay 1963, book 1, part 1, p. 274

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 276

Hardinge. Two days later Rani Jindan, who was thought to have coached her son in his refusal, was escorted to Sheikhpura, twenty-five miles from Lahore,<sup>1</sup> and her allowance was reduced to less than one-third of its former size. Here she was the focus of further intrigues, with many chiefs openly expressing their sympathy for her, and so, at the time of the second Sikh war, she was transferred to Benares. Her deportation was regarded as a national insult and it particularly disturbed the army:

They said that she was the mother of the Khalsa, and that, as she was gone, and the young Duleep Singh in our hands, they had no longer any one to fight for or uphold; that they had no inducement to oppose Moolraj and if he came to attack them, would seize the Sirdars and their officers and go over to him.<sup>2</sup>

Neither Hardinge nor Lawrence, nor even the young politicals in the Punjab, sufficiently recognized the fact that though the Sikh army was decisively defeated at Sobraon, it felt itself less vanquished than betrayed. In April 1847 Lawrence warned that the disbanded soldiers were ready to take part in any disturbance, but he concluded that their

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<sup>1</sup>That she was not removed further from the capital was owing to the opposition to her exile outside the country of the chiefs, who were "decidedly averse to incur what they considered the odium of participating in effecting the banishment of the Maharanee . . ." Only three members of the council of regency, including Tej Singh, signed the order that banished her. Bell, Major Evans, The Annexation of the Punjaub and The Maharajah Duleep Singh, Ludhiana 1969, p. 25

<sup>2</sup>The Resident to the governor-general, 25 May 1848 (Bell, pp. 30-1)



recent defeats were too fresh in their memories for the Khalsa to think yet in terms of overt opposition to the British.<sup>1</sup>

The Resident marvelled at the good conduct of the Sikh army during the previous year when many of the disbanded senior officers were "struggling for existence," and when "so little justice has been done, even in recent reductions."<sup>2</sup> Most of the Sikh soldiers came from the Manjha, an unirrigated area around Lahore and Amritsar where rainfall was uncertain and the land was unable adequately to support the people; military service was therefore very important to the economy of the region. The British attempted to make the Manjha more fertile, and Hardinge inquired into the practicability of opening the canal between Amritsar and Lahore; at the same time Major Robert Napier was planning to extend a canal between the Ravi and the Beas rivers.

Although many of the Sikhs were able to re-enlist in their own service or in those of Gulab Singh and the Company, a large number of men - according to Khushwant Singh, 20,000 - were let loose on the countryside without occupation. For the moment they were a potential rather than an immediate danger and John Lawrence, while deputizing for his brother during the latter's absence from Lahore in May 1846, reported

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<sup>1</sup>Henry Lawrence to the secretary to the government of India, 29 April 1847. (British Sessional Papers, 1849, xli, pp. 44-5, No. 3, enclosure 4)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

that the disbanded troops were "all quiet at home."<sup>1</sup> A year later, however, the Resident reported that while a "large majority" of them had found some sort of occupation, there were "still very many floating on the surface of society."<sup>2</sup>

Even those soldiers who had been fortunate enough to be re-enlisted were not entirely happy; in fact, Tej Singh warned in 1846 that it would be "less dangerous, and would prove less embarrassing, to disband them all, and raise a new army, than to continue a man of them in service."<sup>3</sup> Their pay had been reduced from the inflated levels it had reached before the war and their arrears were considerable, although the situation was eased as the reductions ordered in the treaty took effect.<sup>4</sup> George Lawrence found the men at Peshawar three to eight months in arrears. The situation was worse in other areas but this frontier garrison was given priority and Lawrence was able quickly to regularize the pay system, the troops being paid in money rather than, as so often previously, in assignments on a particular area. At Hardinge's suggestion the distribution of pay was made in Lawrence's

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<sup>1</sup>John Lawrence to Henry Lawrence, 26 Aug. 1846. (Bosworth Smith, 1, 193)

<sup>2</sup>Henry Lawrence to Currie, 2 June 1847. (Edwardes and Merivale, 414)

<sup>3</sup>Currie, 27 Sept. 1848. (Bell, p. 70)

<sup>4</sup>By early 1848 the Sikh army comprised 16,972 infantry, 11,892 cavalry, and 1568 artillery.

presence so that the Sikh troops would ascribe the credit for the novel regularity with which they were paid to the efficient administration of the Company officials.

At the same time, by a few necessary acts of severity, a wholesome dread was established among the troops, who soon understood that while prompt obedience would be rigidly enforced, every consideration would be shown to their just complaints and grievances.<sup>1</sup>

Clearly in this and in other areas of the Punjab the discipline of the new Sikh army was cause for concern. In the Sind-Sagar Doab John Nicholson was told to ensure that parades and drills were attended to "without allowing the troops to be unduly harassed." Reynell Taylor, on his way to Jamrud, found no guards at two of the guardhouses on the route, and on another occasion a jemadar's guard turned out with only three men, the jemadar being ignorant of the whereabouts of the rest. Edwardes remarked that the Sikh troops did not like the reintroduction of discipline: "They did not want justice, they wanted immunity from law."<sup>2</sup>

"The constitution and discipline of the Sikh regular army has always engaged the Governor-General's most anxious attention," Lawrence was told.<sup>3</sup> One suggestion made by Hardinge in this regard was that the new Articles of War being framed for the Sikh army by Major MacGregor should be kept

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<sup>1</sup>Lawrence, Sir George, Reminiscences of Forty-three Years in India, London 1874, p. 231

<sup>2</sup>Edwardes, H. B., A Year on the Punjab Frontier, London 1851, 1, 204

<sup>3</sup>The secretary with the governor-general to Henry Lawrence, 14 Aug. 1847. (British Sessional Papers, 1849, xli, p. 72, No. 8, enclosure 3)

simple, "like those of our irregular cavalry." He also thought that it might be expedient for the Sikh government to be persuaded of the necessity for abolishing the French system of drill prevailing in its army and for adopting English tactics and discipline. He did not, however, wish to put too great pressure on the Durbar in these matters.

In spite of these disciplinary problems Hardinge was, on balance, optimistic over the future with regard to the Sikh army. In July 1846 he told Peel:

They all know from the General down to the drum Boy that the preservation of the (Sikh) Raj depends on their subordination to the Government of the Maharaja. They also know that they have no longer the means of taking the field, and upon the whole I anticipate a favourable issue.<sup>1</sup>

Early in 1847 the governor-general confidently reported to Hobhouse that "the Sikh State as a military power is utterly annihilated, and can never recover to be of any real cause of uneasiness to the British Government."<sup>2</sup>

In the upshot the outbreak that led to the second Sikh war started not in the Sikh army or community but in a Muslim area at a considerable distance from Lahore, and Durbar troops before their defection actually inflicted a severe defeat on Bhai Maharaj Singh, a Sikh chief allied to the rebel Diwan Mulraj. Left to themselves, by mid 1848 the

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 22 June 1846. H. P. 1

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Hobhouse, 21 Jan. 1847. (Hasrat, B. J., The Punjab Papers, Hoshiarpur 1970, p. 117)

Sikh troops were not discontented, being regularly paid and lightly worked, enjoying batta for service beyond the Indus for the first time as well as liberal hot weather leave, and having the prospect of a pension at the end of their service. But the failure of the British to defeat Mulraj quickly, together with incitement on the part of the Rani, and some of the chiefs, worked havoc on the discipline of the Sikh troops. Nonetheless a considerable number of Sikh troops, regular and irregular, fought throughout the war with the British.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the problems posed by the recalcitrance of the Rani and the reorganization of the Sikh army, Hardinge was inclined to view the prospects for peace in the Punjab with characteristic hopefulness. In July 1846 he expressed what he felt was a minority opinion, that the Sikh government would survive the autumn.

There was scarcely a month in 1847 when Hardinge did not report favourably on the situation in the Punjab. In May he forwarded to the secret committee a despatch from Lahore in which Lawrence reported that though at some stage it was probable that the Sikhs would try to oust the British, the capital was secure against such attempt. While Hardinge endorsed the Resident's view that a revolt might take place if the opportunity were to be afforded - "nothing is too foolish, nothing too desperate, for Asiatic zealots and

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<sup>1</sup>Cf., Bell, pp. 106-12. Major Bell claims that "at least 20,000" of Lahore's subjects assisted in suppressing the rebellion.

desperadoes to attempt" - he felt that nothing had happened at Lahore to cause "any unusual feeling of apprehension." In addition, he repeated Lawrence's statement that the Punjab had never been so tranquil in the memory of man.<sup>1</sup>

On 7 July 1847 the governor-general wrote that the affairs of the Punjab were "of a satisfactory character, showing a progressive improvement in the civil and military administration of the country . . . The Punjab is reported to be in a state of the most perfect tranquillity."<sup>2</sup> Five months later, when he was returning to Calcutta preparatory to handing over to Dalhousie, Hardinge wrote that "Lieut.-Colonel Lawrence reports everything to be quite tranquil in the Punjab."<sup>3</sup>

These regular reports on the state of the country give the lie to those critics who implied<sup>4</sup> that Hardinge's optimism stemmed from neglect or from a facile misunderstanding of the true situation. Hardinge always kept a close watch on the Punjab and for nearly two years after the treaty of Lahore he remained near the frontier, never going further away than Lucknow. In his anxiety to find out whether or not

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to the secret committee, 25 May 1847. (British Sessional Papers, 1849, xli, p. 40, No. 3)

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to the secret committee, 7 July 1847. (British Sessional Papers, 1849, xli, p. 51, No. 6)

<sup>3</sup>Hardinge to the secret committee, 2 Dec. 1847. (British Sessional Papers, 1849, xli, p. 116, No. 16)

<sup>4</sup>Sir William Hunter, Dalhousie's biographer, quoted with some derision Hardinge's statement that not a gun would be fired in India for seven years, ignoring his accurate forecast of the serious consequences that would result from a failure quickly to subdue local disturbances such as the one that occurred at Multan.

the subsidiary system was working, he asked Lawrence in May 1847 if signs of disaffection apparent in the Sikh capital might have been avoided by direct annexation; personally he doubted it.<sup>1</sup> In another letter he instructed the Resident to

Let me know what you say now, after three months' experience of your government, and a more intimate knowledge of the resources of the country, whether the policy of March 1846 was right; and whether that of December will stand the test of time - that is, for seven years.<sup>2</sup>

All the British officials in the Punjab testified to there having been an unprecedented calm in the country in 1847 and early 1848. There was peace even in the long-troubled Peshawar valley. When George Lawrence returned there in January 1848 after a four months' absence spent collecting revenue in the Yusufzai country, so profound "was the tranquillity prevailing there and throughout the entire Punjab, and so complete the absence of all causes of alarm, that I was accompanied by my wife and children."<sup>3</sup> At the end of 1847 Nicholson was able to report to the Resident that the country around Hasan Abdul and Rawalpindi, "hitherto more or less disturbed, is perfectly quiet and the Kardars, for the first time for years, move about without guards."<sup>4</sup> On

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Henry Lawrence, 17 May 1847. (Edwardes and Merivale, p. 413)

<sup>2</sup>Hardinge to Henry Lawrence, 16 April 1847. (Edwardes and Merivale, pp. 412-3)

<sup>3</sup>George Lawrence, p. 73

<sup>4</sup>Trotter, p. 73

Dalhousie's arrival in Calcutta "The Friend of India" boasted that "the last obstacle to the complete, and apparently the final, pacification of India has been removed . . . Not a shot is fired from the Indus to Cape Comorin against our will."<sup>1</sup> Even after the uprising at Multan Hobhouse was able to tell Dalhousie that in his consultations with Hardinge and Lawrence neither entertained "any apprehensions of a general outbreak in the Punjab . . ."<sup>2</sup>

But while the Punjab was seemingly settling down under British management, the man whose tolerance and understanding had largely contributed to this favourable state of affairs had had to be replaced, on grounds of health, at Lahore. On 21 August 1847 Henry Lawrence left the Sikh capital for Simla, leaving his brother John as acting Resident. On October 17 he returned to Lahore but only stayed a few weeks before leaving for England; he asked Hardinge to appoint his brother as his successor.

Lewin Bowring, one of his assistants, wrote of John Lawrence that "He was a far abler man at details than his brother, though less considerate, perhaps, towards the Sikh chiefs."<sup>3</sup> Having come to the conclusion that it would become increasingly difficult to leave the Punjab entirely to itself,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid, p. 74

<sup>2</sup>Hobhouse to Dalhousie, 24 June 1848 (Hasrat, Punjab Papers, pp. 167-8)

<sup>3</sup>Bosworth Smith, i, 218



John Lawrence was an early proponent of the policy that was embodied in the treaty of Bhairawal. He was convinced that the country could not be ruled "by rosewater expressions or by buttermilk management." Thus where Henry Lawrence had been prepared to proceed slowly, through the Durbar, his brother instituted root-and-branch reforms in the land-revenue settlement, treating the Punjab as he had the Jullundur Doab, as if it was already annexed. Ignoring Hardinge's advice that the Resident use his powers with moderation, John Lawrence acted "like a district officer of a large district not the Resident holding extraordinary powers in a warlike kingdom which, it was intended, would soon be absolutely autonomous."<sup>1</sup>

On 3 April 1848 John Lawrence returned to the Jullundur and Frederick Currie, recently knighted for his part in the treaty of Bhairawal, took over the Residency. He was competent in an officious way but had little knowledge of the Punjab or the Sikhs. Currie realized that his predecessor had exceeded his duty:

I could wish that our interference with these details (financial matters) had been less, but it is impossible now to recede,

he wrote.

I need hardly remark that the whole property of the country has changed hands and the whole state of society has been altered, in all its elements, two or three times, during the revolutions that have taken place in these parts within the period.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Thorburn, S. S., The Punjab in Peace and War, Edinburgh and London 1904

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 96

Unfortunately Currie continued John Lawrence's stern and politically blind treatment of leading figures in the Punjab such as Diwan Mulraj.

Just as he kept a close watch on political developments in the Punjab, so Hardinge also devoted much of his time to observing the military situation on the north-west frontier. Among his papers are a number of reports dealing specifically with the establishment in this area as well as memoranda by the governor-general himself concerning the posting of the queen's troops, the annual relief of the regiments garrisoning the Punjab, and so on. The study of these papers shows beyond doubt that Hardinge prepared the army in most respects for any possible emergency.

The most controversial aspect of Hardinge's military measures after the war was his reduction of the strength of the sepoy regiments in the Indian army. The economic strain of maintaining a large army, as well as his own desire to improve the educational system and to increase the expenditure on public works, prompted Hardinge to try to reduce the military budget: "What I save in discharging useless soldiers I apply to purposes of more lasting and peaceable utility," he told his stepson.<sup>1</sup>

In the nine years preceding 1845 the Indian interest-bearing debt had increased from £31,848,579 to £40,510,974, a rise of approximately twenty-seven per cent, and the annual

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Sir Walter James, 20 April 1847. H. P. iv

budgetary deficit varied between £381,787 and £2,138,713 (the last year in which there had been a surplus was 1837/8). In this nine-year period the annual revenue, after deducting the cost of collection, rose from £15,202,340 to an estimated £17,159,760. In 1844/5 the military expenditure, including the "home charges" - payment for the use of queen's troops and so on - was £11,897,643. In other words the cost of the military establishment amounted to approximately sixty-nine per cent of the revenue.<sup>1</sup> The first Sikh war did not, however, prove too heavy a financial burden. Hardinge estimated that after the indemnity had been paid the war would have cost no more than £250,000, and this sum was exceeded by the annual revenue of the Jullundur Doab.

In 1847, therefore, Hardinge decided to make a considerable reduction in the strength of the Indian army. This decision was undoubtedly influenced by the apparent tranquillity of the Punjab, although some contemporaries, among them Major-General Thackwell, thought that the optimistic reports on the state of that country owed more to the governor-general's desire to reduce the military budget than they did to the actual situation.

Hardinge was in fact well aware of the dangers posed by peace-time retrenchment. In 1826, when clerk to the ordnance, he issued a memorandum on the expediency of being prepared at all times for war. Although this paper naturally

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<sup>1</sup> "Returns of the Military Charges of India (and the) Amount of Revenues etc for the years 1837 to 1845" published by East India House, 30 June 1846. H. P.

concerned England and the ordnance department it is illustrative of his thinking on military matters as a whole. He warned against "the habit of looking at all our establishments as a sort of arrangement limited to the duties required of them in peace, without reference to a state of preparation for war," and added that "we ought to redouble our efforts to counteract the ill-effects of over-reduction for all the various parts of which the military force of the empire is composed."<sup>1</sup>

Subject to the two principles of maintaining the strength of the European troops and of re-distributing the army so as to ensure he had adequate resources to cope with any emergency in the Punjab, Hardinge proposed to reduce the Indian army by 50,200 men, 33,400 of whom were to be from the Bengal army. He was careful not to disband existing regiments so that in the event of war they could be recruited up to their former strength, but chose instead to reduce every native infantry regiment from 1,000 men to 800, and cavalry regiments from 500 men to 420; on the other hand he raised eight new cavalry regiments. By this method efficiency was not reduced in the same ratio as expense. In the artillery only the horse establishment was cut, trained artillerists being a valuable commodity. At the same time the amount of ammunition that a battery could take into the field was increased. In April 1847 Hardinge told Peel that 10,000 men had already

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge, C. S., p. 38

been discharged, "and the overgrown army was never in a state of greater contentment."<sup>1</sup>

The governor-general forecast that the reduction would save the government £1,000,000 annually, and that in two years there would be a budgetary surplus. One defense made of the reductions was that they scarcely affected the strength and readiness of the troops on the frontier.

A return of 1 July 1846 showed that there were 42,052 men, of whom 7506 were European, on the frontier, not counting two irregular regiments for which returns were not available, and 94 guns.<sup>2</sup> At the beginning of 1847 the total force on the frontier, after taking into account the proposed reduction, was given at 44,262 all ranks, together with 120 field and 114 siege guns. If the garrisons at Meerut and Delhi, and in the posts between those places and the frontier, were included the total force covering the Punjab amounted to 55,738 men and 120 guns.<sup>3</sup> The planned distribution for 1848 envisaged the concentration between Meerut and Lahore of seven of the eleven European infantry regiments in the Bengal presidency, as well as all three regiments of European cavalry and twenty-one companies and troops of European

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Peel, 5 April 1847. H. P. i

<sup>2</sup>Return of the corps on the north-west frontier, 1 July 1846; adjutant-general's office, Simla. H. P.

<sup>3</sup>Memorandum by Hardinge, 10 Jan. 1847. H. P. ii

artillery. Far from attempting to subordinate his government's military commitments on the frontier to the need for economy, Hardinge actually refused to accede to a request by Napier that the force in Sind be reduced to at most 5000 men. The governor-general would not allow this force, which was intended rather to watch the Punjab than to police Sind,<sup>1</sup> to fall below a strength of 8000 men.

Besides its economic benefits, the reduction of the army had the advantage of remedying the shortage of European officers. In the decade following 1837 the Indian army's strength had risen from 168,477 men to 250,030,<sup>2</sup> but the supply of officers had not kept pace: in the same period 656 European officers had been added to the infantry, 146 to the artillery, and 32 to the engineers. However, the European officers of sepoy regiments were not included in the reduction of the native army, even when their companies were disbanded.

Gough did not welcome the decision to reduce the strength of the army and, although he had to acquiesce in it, he tried to limit the reduction. When Hardinge first outlined his plans in a memorandum of 2 January 1847 Gough had written: "I deeply regret the financial difficulties, and the

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge felt that Napier's force in upper Sind would have "no difficulty in keeping Mooltan in allegiance to Lahore" - Hardinge to Ellenborough, 7 June 1846. (Hasrat, Punjab Papers, p. 94 )

<sup>2</sup>The Friend of India, 22 July 1847. H. P.

consequent reductions rendered indispensable thereby, particularly until time shall have tested the feelings which the late arrangements with the Lahore Government may produce." He pointed out that most of the native infantry regiments on the frontier were 100 men over establishment so that cutting their strength to 800 would involve a larger reduction than Hardinge contemplated. In fact the strength of the thirty-two regiments on the frontier just before the reduction was 30,142 all ranks, which meant that each was on average 58 men below strength. In addition these regiments each lost on average only 72 men.

Although it is doubtful that a reduction equivalent to less than eight per cent of the force on the frontier made a great deal of difference to the eventual outcome of the second war, Hardinge's move was widely criticized. "I never could understand why he was in such a damned hurry," growled Wellington.<sup>2</sup> In May 1848 Captain Haines, always a staunch supporter of the commander-in-chief, told his father that unless the disbanded sepoy were quickly re-enlisted they would join Mulraj.

We who have so often been told by Lord Hardinge and Co. that tranquillity reigns in the Punjab, who will have the same monstrous fiction repeated to us, by the next mail in the report of the Directors' dinner to the little Viscount,<sup>3</sup> we

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<sup>1</sup>Rait, Gough

<sup>2</sup>Thompson and Garratt, p. 338

<sup>3</sup>On 2 May 1846 the governor-general was created Viscount Hardinge, of Lahore, and of King's Newton, co. Derby.

Shall have hot work cut out for us in the cold weather. His acts will make it hotter than it would have been . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Despite being pressed by Gough to return the native army to its former strength Dalhousie refused to do so until 30 September 1848.

Critics of Hardinge's decision to reduce the size of the Indian army sometimes overlooked the fact that in the post-war period he ordered the raising of several regiments that were to earn a distinguished place in Indian military history. On 30 July 1846 the governor-general ordered that two Sikh infantry regiments be raised. According to Captain Mackenzie, who commanded the Ludhiana Regiment, Hardinge kept these two units under his direct supervision, issuing orders through the military secretary. An unfortunate result of this arrangement was the jealousy of the various military departments who "ignored them, knew nothing about them, cut their pay, and would do nothing for them."<sup>2</sup> When the second Sikh war broke out the whole of Mackenzie's regiment volunteered for service against their fellow-countrymen.

A unit which was to have a particularly illustrious history was the Corps of Guides, a brain-child of Henry Lawrence, whose formation was approved by Hardinge on 14 December 1846. Its duties consisted mainly in aiding the civil authorities against dissident tribesmen and in gathering

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<sup>1</sup>Captain Haines to his father, 7 May 1848. (Rait, Haines, pp. 47-8)

<sup>2</sup>Mackenzie, Lt-Gen. Colin, Storms and Sunshine of a Soldier's Life, Edinburgh 1884, ii, 26



intelligence. Under the control of Lieutenant Lumsden the Guides quickly became the most sought-after band of irregular levies in the north-west and played a considerable part in the second war. At the same time Hardinge ordered the raising of a Frontier Brigade in the trans- and cis-Sutlej states "for Police and General Purposes." This brigade was put under Lawrence's orders and was to consist of one cavalry and four infantry regiments.<sup>1</sup>

Illustrative of Hardinge's preoccupation with the military situation on the frontier was a series of orders he issued concerning the mobile columns at Lahore, Ferozepore, and Julundur. Early in 1847 he decided to move three native infantry regiments, one irregular cavalry regiment, and all the European artillery except one reserve company out of Lahore to the Anarkali Lines, a cantonment outside the city. The townspeople and the occupying troops would now be completely separated. This arrangement also facilitated the rapid preparation of a mobile column consisting of one European and three native infantry regiments, one regiment of irregular cavalry, one company of sappers and miners, and 12 field guns. If this force was used its place in the lines could be taken by troops moved up from Ferozepore. Hardinge stressed the importance of keeping in a state of readiness the marching establishment of camels, doolies and so on for the Lahore force. He also

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<sup>1</sup>Governor-general's order, foreign department, no. 2457, 14 Dec. 1846. (History of the Guides, Aldershot 1938, vol. 1)

ordered the commissariat to maintain a marching establishment for four native infantry regiments and 12 guns of the Jullundur column, and instructed the remainder of the force in the Doab to keep up enough animals for the men's kit, the spare baggage and the tents.

Thus there were three mobile columns under orders to be ready to march at short notice. Their combined strength would be about 10,000 infantry, 1500 cavalry, and 36 field guns, a sufficient force in Hardinge's view to meet any contingency likely to arise "in the present state of the Punjab." As a further check on their preparedness the governor-general suggested that these brigades should be mustered monthly in marching order, and asked the three column commanders to submit reports on the probable time it would take them to cross the rivers to their front.<sup>1</sup>

During 1847 memoranda on the subject of the Lahore garrison passed regularly between Hardinge, Gough, the Resident and Littler. The governor-general noted that if additional troops were needed at Lahore he would have no objection to moving up one of the two cavalry regiments at Ambala, a means of reinforcing the garrison which he preferred to transferring the infantry regiment at Ferozepore, which anyway was only five days march from the Sikh capital. However, with troops nearby in the Jullundur Doab and the hills,

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<sup>1</sup>Memorandum by the governor-general, 10 Jan. 1847. H. P. 11. An example of this preparedness was the muster, once a month, of the cattle of the mobile columns - Morning Chronicle, 15 Jan. 1849.

he felt no additional troops were necessary, but offered to consider attentively any suggestions made by Lawrence or by Brigadier Wheeler, commanding in the Doab. In case of emergency Hardinge asked Gough to order the officer commanding the Ferozepore column to obey any request made to him by Lawrence that he move up his brigade without wasting time referring to the government.<sup>1</sup>

The governor-general was afraid that the addition of a further European regiment to the garrison at Lahore might endanger the harmonious relations that subsisted between the troops and the townspeople. Furthermore, if that regiment was to be infantry it would mean withdrawing the European infantry regiment from Agra where it protected the fort and magazine and was well placed to support the subsidiary forces in Gwalior and Oudh. Nonetheless Hardinge felt that these inconveniences were not to be compared to the importance of "holding Lahore with a firm hand by means of a preponderating European force."<sup>2</sup> Both Gough and Littler urged that a second European infantry regiment be garrisoned at Lahore, and accordingly the commander-in-chief was authorized on 9 July 1847 to move up the one at Ferozepore as soon as the barracks for its reception had been completed.

Although in the distribution of British troops Hardinge

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid

<sup>2</sup>Memorandum by the governor-general in the foreign department, 26 June 1847. H. P. 11

took all possible precautions against any uprising, he hoped that the Sikh army would be the medium of putting down disturbances. He proposed that three Sikh regiments be placed in and near Lahore. The remainder of the army should be so distributed that no large area of the country would be left without a force near at hand, for otherwise "insurrection may spread which, at the outset, might have been quelled with ease by a small force - the danger becomes great in proportion as the means of putting down the disturbance are distant."<sup>1</sup> Hardinge felt that Company troops "ought never to cross the Ravee unless justified by a strong case of necessity such as that which occurred last year in Cashmere."<sup>2</sup>

Hardinge's concern was not simply for men and guns alone. In a memorandum of 26 January 1847 the governor-general recommended that a committee be set up to report on various points relating to barrack accommodation, paying particular attention to the comparative salubrity and expense of hill and plain stations. At that time a barrack for one thousand European infantry was under construction at Dagshai, in the Simla hills, while another of the same size was being built at Jullundur.

When the committee decided in favour of the hill stations Hardinge began to think in terms of stationing as

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<sup>1</sup>Memorandum by the governor-general, 10 Jan. 1847. H. P. 11

<sup>2</sup>Memorandum by the governor-general in the foreign department, 26 June 1847. H. P. 11

many European troops as possible in the hills. He suggested that as there was no need for a European infantry regiment at Ambala the one already there should be posted in the hills, joining the three already stationed around Simla.<sup>1</sup> He also proposed that a marching establishment should be maintained at Kalka, where the troops from the hill stations would meet, enabling them to march either on the frontier or into the interior of Bengal.

Not only was Hardinge concerned with the health of the troops, but he also showed a lively interest in their discipline and morale. Discipline was a matter he left largely to Gough; however, as a means of improving it, he suggested that smaller rooms be built in the new barracks, and he was very much in favour of regimental reading rooms, equipped with chess and draughts boards as well as with books. But on the whole he was chary of sanctioning any new departure in matters relating to discipline that had not already been put into effect by the military authorities at home.

An example of the close attention Hardinge paid to the men's welfare was the approval he gave while on his way back to Calcutta to the placing of stoves in the rooms of the hill barracks. At the same time he ordered an enquiry into the bad quality of the food supplied the Bengal army by its contractors. He also increased the sepoy's disability

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<sup>1</sup>Memorandum by the governor-general, 7 Dec. 1847. H. P. 11

pensions and ordered that the Lahore garrison be relieved annually so that all the native regiments might have a chance to earn foreign service batta.

As a corollary to his injunction that the marching establishments of the mobile columns be kept in a state of readiness, Hardinge paid close attention to the improvement of British communications in and to the Punjab. He instructed Lieutenant-Colonel Boileau, an engineer, to report to him by mid-June 1846 on the practicability of bridging the Sutlej between Bilaspur and Rupar. But when Boileau found a suitable site the military secretary questioned the feasibility of establishing a permanent pontoon-bridge that would enable the British to communicate with the Punjab at all seasons, and added that the uncertainty on this point was a contributory factor in Hardinge's deferring to select locations for new infantry barracks beyond the Sutlej.<sup>1</sup> All the evidence suggests that at the end of Hardinge's period of office work had still not begun on bridging the river.

Early in 1847 Hardinge wrote a memorandum on the military communications between Meerut, Delhi, Ambala, and the hill stations and the frontier. In it he noted the desirability of finding the best route between Karnal and Ferozepore, and at the same time ordered the circuitous route from Karnal to Ambala to be shortened "at once" if the expense involved was not too great. The road from Phillour to Jullundur

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<sup>1</sup>Order to the quartermaster-general of the army from Lt-Col Stuart, 7 Sept. 1847. H. P.

was to be made passable at all seasons, and the ferries across the Ghaggar and other rivers were ordered improved.<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant Hodson was ordered in November 1847 "to make a good road from Lahore to the Sutlej, distance forty miles,' in as brief a space as possible."<sup>2</sup> Within a month he had surveyed and marked nearly twenty miles of the road, "and made a very large piece of it."<sup>3</sup>

One of the most severe critics of the state of military preparedness left by Hardinge was his successor.

You have heard, doubtless, of Lord Hardinge's army, which he said he left, of 50,000 men and 100 guns on the frontier,

Dalhousie wrote.

This was all very fine, but the frontier 'included Meerut,' the position of which you will see on the map.<sup>4</sup> Of the 50,000, 8000 were at Mooltan - a large force must be left at Lahore always. Our Jullundur province must be guarded. Maharajah Gholab Singh must be provided against - troops must be left in some degree in the Upper Province. Thus you see how little of the 50,000 men was readily available as an army to be moved.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, he alleged in justification of his failure quickly to reduce the outbreak at Multan that Hardinge had discharged the carriage for the siege guns.

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<sup>1</sup>Memorandum by Hardinge, 16 Feb. 1847. H. P. ii

<sup>2</sup>Hodson to a member of his family, 15 Nov. 1847. (Hodson, Rev. George, ed., Twelve Years of a Soldier's Life in India, Boston 1860, p. 102)

<sup>3</sup>Hodson to his sister, 15 Dec. 1847. (Hodson, pp. 105-6)

<sup>4</sup>During the second Sikh war Dalhousie drew troops from much further afield than Meerut.

<sup>5</sup>Dalhousie to Couper, 22 Dec. 1848. (Baird, p. 39)

Perhaps the most effective rebuttal of this indictment came from its author. Before the reverse of Ramnagar threw him into something approaching panic Dalhousie had been confident of winning a quick victory. In May he wrote that

We have in the two divisions on the frontier upwards of 50,000 men, with a large proportion of British force, and an immense strength of guns . . . Nothing can happen to us, if we keep together, and when October comes we will have a squaring of accounts . . .<sup>1</sup>

Four weeks later he wrote that with 11,000 men at Lahore and the same number in the Jullundur Doab the British could maintain themselves against anything that could come against them until after the rains. Even Sir William Hunter, who was generally not very well disposed towards Hardinge, accepted the latter's figures as to the force on the frontier, adding that the mobile columns were ready to be hurled "at a day's notice" against the enemy; "everything (was) in a state of perfect preparation down to (the) commissariat carts, transport bullocks, and litters for the wounded or sick."<sup>2</sup>

Dalhousie could not justifiably criticize the state of military preparedness left by Hardinge in view of his own rejection in June 1848 of a request by Gough that the army on the frontier be increased, and his refusal, on the grounds of economy, to allow the collection of transport.

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<sup>1</sup>Dalhousie to Couper, 10 May 1848. (Baird, p. 26)

<sup>2</sup>Hunter, Sir William W., The Marquess of Dalhousie, Oxford 1890, p. 62



Undoubtedly the belief that the Punjab was tranquil, and would remain so for some time, influenced Hardinge in his decision to reduce the Indian army and to limit as far as possible the amount of carriage at the disposal of those regiments that were not brigaded into mobile columns. But the concentration of a large part of the Bengal army in the frontier area and the formation of three such columns attest both to his desire to omit no precautions and to his belief that any uprising in the Punjab would begin on a local level and could therefore be crushed in embryo. The use of mobile columns to prevent a full-scale war was the essence of Hardinge's policy. It is most probable that had he remained in India he would have attempted the immediate reduction of Multan, and it is quite possible that had he done so the second Sikh war might have been deferred or even avoided altogether.

Dalhousie was far less averse than his predecessor to having to fight the Sikhs on a national level, treating the outbreak at Multan as proof of the breakdown of his predecessor's experiment, yet he did not alter the measures taken by Hardinge in support of a policy which was based to a considerable extent on the prevention of local risings. Gough was allowed to sit out the hot season at Simla while little was done to reduce Multan, despite the warnings of British officials throughout the Punjab that such inaction would lead to a general war. Although Hardinge's policy was reversed

the military preparations undertaken by him were such that when Gough confronted the Sikhs at Ramnagar he had only about 4000 men fewer than at Ferozeshah (where he had faced a far stronger enemy), despite the detachment of seven infantry and five cavalry regiments to besiege Multan, and the absence of Wheeler's brigade which was operating independently in the Jullundur.

The test of Hardinge's preparations came almost without warning - according to George Lawrence the outbreak at Multan and its succeeding events was "as violent and overwhelming as it was unlooked for and unexpected."<sup>1</sup> It may be that had the statesmanlike Henry Lawrence remained at Lahore trouble would have been avoided at Multan.

In 1846 Lawrence had resolved a dispute between Diwan Mulraj and the Sikh government over the terms demanded by the Durbar as a payment for its confirming the Diwan in the governorship of Multan. In 1847 Mulraj appealed to John Lawrence to moderate Lahore's increasingly exacting demands. Unfortunately the Resident rejected his appeal and he resigned at the end of the year, but Lawrence persuaded him to stay at his post till at least mid-March 1848, so as to realize the revenues from the harvest. Mulraj agreed, on the condition that his resignation be kept secret. However, Currie disclosed to the Durbar this agreement that had been made without

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<sup>1</sup>George Lawrence, p. 240

its knowledge, and it was agreed to replace the governor; Kahan Singh Man was chosen as being amenable to British influence, and with him went Vans Agnew, as the Company's political agent, and Lieutenant Anderson. Currie told Vans Agnew that his duties would be "very arduous, as General Kahan Singh Man's will be almost nominal and the administration will be really conducted by the British Agent . . ."<sup>1</sup>

When the British officers arrived in Multan with the new governor in April 1848 they were attacked and wounded, and shortly afterwards killed in the fort where they had taken shelter. When Currie learned on April 24 of the initial attack on his officers he immediately ordered Major-General Whish, Littler's successor as commander of the Army of the Punjab, to move on Multan. The following day, when he was informed of the death of the two men, the Resident counter-manded the order, explaining that "if the question were one merely affecting the maintenance of the Sikh Government and preserving the tranquillity of the provinces we should scarcely be justified in expending more British blood and British treasure in such service."<sup>2</sup>

In all probability Hardinge would have acted immediately to quell the uprising had he remained in India. After consultations with him, as well as with Wellington, Sir Charles Napier, and Henry Lawrence, Hobhouse wrote to Dalhousie on

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<sup>1</sup>Currie to Elliot, 6 April 1848. (Mahajan, p. 82)

<sup>2</sup>Currie to Dalhousie, 27 April 1848. (Khushwant Singh, ii, 69-70)

June 24 to tell him that his inaction with regard to Multan was unjustified. Henry Lawrence, whose views so often coincided with those of Hardinge, wrote in October that had he been at Lahore at the time of the outbreak he would have taken as many troops as were available and advanced on Multan by forced marches. He pointed out that he had attacked Kangra, a stronger fort in his opinion than Multan, during the hot season.<sup>1</sup> The members of the Sikh government, who supposedly could rely on British support, were unsuccessful in their entreaties to the Resident that the uprising be speedily crushed. Many of the officers in the Punjab, among them John and George Lawrence, James Abbott, Reynell Taylor, Herbert Edwardes, and Harry Lumsden urged that everything possible be done to reduce Multan, whatever were the risks involved in moving troops at such a time. Later, when it became clear that large-scale military operations would not begin until late in the year, some of these officers suspected that the failure quickly to crush Mulraj owed something to a desire on the part of the government to annex the Punjab, a course that would require a full-scale revolt and the subsequent military occupation of the country.

Dalhousie implicitly admitted the truth of this suspicion when on 4 May 1848 he informed Hobhouse that "If the Sikh power is tardy or impotent to right us, then I shall feel it to be my duty as a servant of the Company and the

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<sup>1</sup>Michael Edwardes, pp. 110-11. Referring to the delay in reducing Multan Lawrence wrote: "We cannot afford in India to shilly-shally and talk of weather and seasons. If we are not ready to take the field at all seasons, we have no business here." - Bell, p. 85

Crown to exact a national reparation from the State of Lahore."<sup>1</sup> Yet a day earlier he had told the Queen that the Sikh government had declared its inability to suppress the rebellion and to exact reparation for the "gross insult offered" the British!<sup>2</sup> Hardinge had shown himself able to distinguish between the actions of the Durbar and one of its officials, but his successor could not.

Although Dalhousie was anxious to assert himself he was relatively inexperienced and had hardly had a chance to settle in at Calcutta before the crisis burst; therefore he was probably more influenced by the commander-in-chief's advice at this juncture than Hardinge would have been. Gough thought that the carriage and commissariat arrangements were inadequate for a rapid march on Multan at that time of year, besides which many of the sepoy were on furlough and it would take him some time to assemble sufficient troops for such a project. He regarded a second Sikh war as inevitable, and his thoughts seem largely to have turned on the requirements for this than on the reduction of far-off Multan. In a minute written in July General Littler agreed with Dalhousie and Gough on the inexpediency of immediate British operations against the city.

One reason for Dalhousie's inaction was his tendency

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<sup>1</sup>Dalhousie to Hobhouse, 4 May 1848. (Hasrat, Punjab Papers, p. 154)

<sup>2</sup>Dalhousie to Queen Victoria, 3 May 1848. (Hasrat, Punjab Papers, p. 152)

to under-estimate the danger posed by Mulraj's continued defiance. He thought that the Multanis were a disorderly mob who might well fall out amongst each other. "The disaffection may not spread, and the affair may be comparatively small," he told Couper.<sup>1</sup> He entertained such hopes despite the fact that he knew disbanded Sikh troops were flocking to Mulraj and that the Durbar had told Currie it could no longer rely on its army.

In the end Currie forced the governor-general's hand. The Resident was becoming increasingly disturbed by the support Mulraj was gaining and on July 10 he ordered Whish to "take immediate measures for the dispatch of a siege train with its establishment, and a competent escort and force, for the reduction of the fort of Mooltan."<sup>2</sup> Dalhousie was annoyed at the sending of this force but felt that to counter-mand it would be dangerous; he contented himself with reproving Currie for arrogating to himself powers to which he was not entitled in the governor-general's view.

On September 9 Sher Singh Attariwala, the commander of the Sikh troops sent by the Durbar to reduce Mulraj to submission, fought alongside the British in an attempt to capture the fort at Multan. His family stood to gain much from the existing situation - his sister was engaged to Dhalip

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<sup>1</sup>Dalhousie to Couper, 10 May 1848. (Baird, p. 27)

<sup>2</sup>Currie to Gen. Whish, 10 July 1848. (Edwardes, A Year on the Punjab Frontier, ii, 410)

Singh - but he became increasingly resentful of the distrust shown him by the British, compounded as it was by James Abbott's humiliating treatment of his father, Chattar Singh. Thus on September 14 he and his men went over to Mulraj. Three weeks later he marched north to join his father, who had finally been goaded into revolt in August.

One day after Sher Singh marched north Dalhousie left Calcutta for the frontier. He began the campaign full of confidence, claiming that "The result cannot be doubted, as a military operation."<sup>1</sup> Two checks, at Ramnagar and Chilianwala, soon disabused him, to the point that between November 27 and December 17 he refused to allow Gough to operate beyond the Chenab. However, on 21 February 1849 the Sikhs were overwhelmingly defeated at Gujarat, and three weeks later they laid down their arms.

Although Dalhousie frequently disclaimed any desire to annex the Punjab, and told Henry Lawrence that at the outset he had been "a sincere friend of Lord Hardinge's policy to establish a strong Hindoo government between the Sutlej and the Khyber,"<sup>2</sup> he was convinced that such a course was no longer feasible. He felt that were the rebellion to spread as a result of British inactivity the Indian government might be "compelled to take the Punjab, whether we like it or not,

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<sup>1</sup>Dalhousie to Couper, 4 Aug. 1848. (Baird, p. 29)

<sup>2</sup>Edwardes and Merivale, p. 422

or (we) may find ourselves embarrassed as to how we are to get reparation, reimbursement and punishment sufficient for the offence that has been committed."<sup>1</sup> In a lengthy private letter to Hobhouse of August 15 he represented annexation as the most "advantageous" policy open to the British. On September 18 he told his friend Couper that he could "see no escape from annexing this infernal country," but added that he would delay doing so until the last possible moment.<sup>2</sup> Of the moral rectitude of annexation he had no doubts.

In a minute addressed to the home government on September 30 he again professed a desire to see the establishment of "a strong, friendly, Hindoo Government in the Punjab," but he believed that this was now out of the question.<sup>3</sup> The British cabinet thought that Dalhousie's advocacy of annexation lacked conviction, and Sir James Lushington, the chairman of the court of directors, strongly opposed the seizure of the Punjab. The prime minister therefore asked the Indian government to submit a detailed report on the administrative and financial aspects of annexation, and told the board of control to issue a directive to Dalhousie forbidding him to take any steps in the matter without authority. Hobhouse, however,

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<sup>1</sup>Dalhousie to Hobhouse, 2 June 1848. (Hasrat, Punjab Papers, p. 163)

<sup>2</sup>Dalhousie to Couper, 18 Sept. 1848. (Hasrat, Punjab Papers, p. 187)

<sup>3</sup>Minute by Dalhousie, 30 Sept. 1848. (Benson, A. C., and Esher, Viscount, The Letters of Queen Victoria, 1st Series, London 1908, ii, 196)



despite his views being in a minority of one in the cabinet, privately told Dalhousie that "if you should feel yourself compelled, by the urgency of the case to adopt that, or any important change, without waiting for the sanction of the Home Authorities, the most favourable construction would be put upon your proceedings."<sup>1</sup>

Despite having decided in favour of annexation by February 1849 Dalhousie still wavered, although his hesitancy had more to do with the method and the timing of such a measure than it had to do with its morality and expediency. On 29 March 1849 Dalhousie finally annexed the country in defiance of the cabinet's orders, and three days later Dhalip Singh signed the Paper of Terms. The Maharaja was ordered out of the Punjab, the Sikh currency was withdrawn, and the country was completely demilitarized. Rulership of the newly-annexed territory was entrusted to a three-man board of administration headed by Henry Lawrence. The British government and the Company authorities were taken totally unawares by Dalhousie's 'fait accompli', and had no choice but to acquiesce in it, which they did in the coldest possible fashion.

Hardinge's attitude towards annexation at this time was ambiguous. He had supported the government in its opposition to Dalhousie's taking such a positive step, but he remarked somewhat obliquely to Henry Lawrence that

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<sup>1</sup>Hobhouse to Dalhousie, 23 Oct. 1848. (Hasrat, Anglo-Sikh Relations, p. 338)

The energy and turbulent spirit of the Sikhs are stated by one section (of politicians here) as ground for not annexing. In my judgment, this is the argument which would dispose me, if I were on the spot, to annex.<sup>1</sup>

In a letter of June 7 Hardinge congratulated Dalhousie on the successful conclusion of the war, to which the latter replied:

It gave me much satisfaction to see that you considered, that the course of events had justified my act in taking possession of it.

And agreeing with you as I did, that the possession of additional territory in the North West was not to be desired by us, I am very sure there was nothing in my despatch in justification of my taking the country, which could be construed to reflect on your policy in refusing to take it.<sup>2</sup>

Hardinge left India on a note of optimism, telling Hobhouse that in his opinion peace would endure in India "beyond the turn of your life and mine."<sup>3</sup> However, his military dispositions proved that he had no intention of allowing the British to be caught unawares by any frontier crisis, even taking into account the reductions he effected in the strength of the army. A good many observers felt that India was about to enter an era of great material improvement, and the apparent tranquillity and orderly administration of the Punjab contributed to this belief. Hardinge himself, as he showed by his economies in the military budget, was most

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Henry Lawrence. (Hunter, p. 83)

<sup>2</sup>Dalhousie to Hardinge, 18 July 1849. H. P.

<sup>3</sup>Hardinge to Hobhouse, 23 Dec. 1847. (Bearce, p. 219)

anxious to divert an increasing proportion of the government's resources towards social objectives, being particularly interested in the furtherance of education and the establishment of a railway network in India.<sup>1</sup>

If events proved that Hardinge had been unduly sanguine as to the prospects of a revived Sikh government effectively guarding the north-west frontier, he had not in fact ignored the difficulties confronting such an attempt, nor overlooked the increasing isolation of the Durbar. He knew that a policy of indirect annexation leading towards eventual independence for the Punjab could only work if British interference in the administration of the country was kept at as low a level as possible, although the first priority of the Company officials was to create a climate of stability in which the Sikh government could prepare itself for the day when it ruled alone. But when Hardinge and Henry Lawrence left India the policy of trusteeship which they had evolved in the Punjab was entrusted to two men who had little faith in it. Dalhousie and John Lawrence magnified the defects of the subsidiary system to prove it unworkable, and, helped by the uprising at Multan, which was allowed to spread in a fashion Hardinge would never have permitted, attempted to present annexation of the Punjab as the only viable way of securing the north-west frontier.

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<sup>1</sup>A report to the Company authorities, written probably in early 1847, mentioned that a project for the construction of a railway from Calcutta to the north-west frontier was under consideration.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

The most outstanding feature of Hardinge's Indian administration was undoubtedly the collapse of the Anglo-Sikh alliance which resulted in the first Sikh war and the post-war attempt by the British to restore the Punjab as a buffer state. Frequently the part played by the governor-general in these developments has been either overlooked or underestimated. Implicit in a number of the accounts describing the first Sikh war is the assumption that Hardinge was carried along by the tide of events on the frontier and that he did little to direct and control them. Hostile critics have added that even his reactions were tardy and inadequate. While there was little that Hardinge could do about the anarchic condition of the Punjab but watch and take precautions against the possibility of invasion, in general he played a more important and positive role in his attempts to resolve the frontier problem than is often realized.

His fears for the security of the frontier had to compete for the governor-general's attention with the more routine tasks of government: in between writing voluminous reports to London, Hardinge grumbled, "I have to jump from Hindoos and legislation to military precautions in the Punjab."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Lady James, 21 April 1845. H. P.

He accomplished a great deal in the sphere of education, establishing a large number of new schools and colleges; he was active in promoting railways; he reduced the salt tax; he largely suppressed the Khonds, a sect given to human sacrifice. Through the medium of the princes, he tried to abolish sati and infanticide; and he showed a keen interest in the preservation of ancient monuments. Only rarely has Hardinge's work in these fields been remarked upon.

However there has been no similar lack of interest in the events on the north-west frontier during his administration, and on four occasions Hardinge's policies and actions with respect to the Punjab became the centre of major controversies. There were lengthy disputes between his supporters and critics over the scale of his preparations and the provocation involved in them, over his overruling of Gough at Ferozeshah, over his failure to annex the Punjab and the sale of Kashmir, and over his reduction of the Indian army. These conflicts, because they were not resolved to the satisfaction of either party, still recur in histories of the area and the period.

Thus Hardinge, who went to India with pacific instructions and intentions, has, almost accidentally, been treated as having been little more than a military governor, his tenure of office an interregnum between the short but lurid governorship of Ellenborough and the remarkable achievements of Dalhousie's rule. In part this view of his admin-

istration resulted from his military background, in part it stemmed from his apparent absorption in the crisis in the Punjab. Yet the soldier displayed more statesmanship with regard to the Punjab than did either of the civilians who preceded and succeeded him as governor-general.

As did many of the governors-general and viceroys of the nineteenth century, Hardinge went to India with a sense of mission; referring to his educational projects he wrote that "by this system of thousands being each year taught the learning of Europe, they become initiated into our way of thinking on most points and think of a more intimate attachment" with their rulers.<sup>1</sup> But he did not allow his enthusiasm for the dissemination of European learning and the implementation of "beneficent projects" to blind him to the fact that his first responsibility was the maintenance of British sovereignty in India.

Hardinge felt that Britain owed the acquisition of her Indian empire to the use of force and could only, at that time, retain it by military strength. But unlike Ellenborough, he did not exaggerate the external threats to the country. There is singularly little mention of the Russian threat in his correspondence, and no doubt he was sitting on the government benches when in 1842 his friend, Peel, told the Commons that the Tsar had given the British government "a positive

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<sup>1</sup>Hardinge to Lady Hardinge, 28 Sept. 1845. H. P.

assurance . . . that he has no wish to disturb British Supremacy in India."<sup>1</sup> He was, however, concerned by the threat posed by some form of Muslim union on the frontier.

The governor-general may have exaggerated the Sikh menace, but he never exploited it as a justification for an expansionist policy in the way that his predecessor would have done. Hardinge was afraid that the Durbar's inability to control its army would result in the Khalsa invading India. But of far greater concern to him - since he regarded the Sikh army as little better than a rabble - was the sustained effort of the Durbar to undermine the discipline and loyalty of the sepoys, as this struck at the very base of British rule in India. Another danger, though rarely alluded to by Hardinge, that it was thought might stem from the real weakness of the Sikh government and the supposed inefficiency of the Khalsa, was the opportunity afforded an invader from across the Indus to use the fertile plains of the Punjab as a springboard for an invasion of India.

Although the Durbar regarded the divisions in the Punjab as evidence of the Sikhs' inability seriously to threaten the security of British India, the governor-general could reasonably reach the opposite conclusion. On the other hand, while any British military activity on the Sutlej would

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<sup>1</sup> Peel's speech, House of Commons, 23 June 1842 (The Speeches of the Late Right Honourable Sir Robert Peel etc., London 1853, iv, 101)

be alarming to the Sikhs, Hardinge had to provide for the possibility of an attack by the Muslims or the Russians, as well as the Sikhs. Although he did not lose sight of the necessity for this, he was so anxious to prove that his preparations had not incited the Sikh invasion that he preferred tacitly to admit that the defensive precautions he had taken were barely sufficient to meet the attack.

Yet in comparing the situation on the frontier in July 1844 and December 1845, Hardinge can hardly be accused of having disregarded military necessity in attempting to solve the crisis by political means, despite having seriously underestimated the Sikh army. In eighteen months the governor-general did a great deal to restore the efficiency of the Indian army, and against the poor showing of the sepoys at Ferozeshah should be set their performance at Aliwal and Sobraon where they gave invaluable support to the European regiments. By the end of 1845 the army on the frontier was as ready in terms of manpower, artillery and transport as it could be expected to have been; its main shortcoming, for which Hardinge could partially be held accountable, was the inadequacy of supplies and ordnance stores.

However, the army's distribution near the frontier was ill-suited to its defense. Although Hardinge increased the garrisons of Ferozepore and Ludhiana, Gough was not allowed to close up the army towards the frontier until too late. Thus the governor-general was, in effect, exposing a



greater number of men to defeat in detail by reinforcing these posts since the support troops were anywhere between 145 miles and 280 miles from Ferozepore. Hardinge later admitted that on strictly military grounds the support station would have been better placed half-way between Ambala and Ferozepore than at the former.

There was, of course, considerable expense and risk involved in concentrating the troops actually on the frontier where they were a target for Sikh subversion, and so great a proportion of the Bengal army could not have been immobilized on the Sutlej for an indefinite period. But Hardinge wavered between concentrating his field force well to the rear of the frontier, temporarily leaving Wheeler and Littler to fend for themselves, as they had assured him they could, and uniting the army in the neighbourhood of the advanced posts. In fairness to Hardinge it must be remarked that this indecision was not based simply on political considerations, but it might have cost the British dear had Sikh generalship not proved so unenterprising.

Valuable as was the governor-general's contribution to the logistic preparation of the field army, towards the end of November 1845 he began to intervene to an unwarranted degree in what should have been Gough's sphere of responsibility. Although it is arguable that his personal initiatives just prior to and during the war rectified omissions or mistakes on the part of the commander-in-chief, Hardinge showed less

than his usual judgement in involving himself in the campaign.

Several months before the war the governor-general expressed doubts as to Gough's ability to command in the field and realized that he might find himself interfering in military matters. He could not remove the commander-in-chief but there was then time for him to have obtained a supplementary commission or to have compelled Gough to resign, as five years later Dalhousie forced Napier's resignation. To have begun to overrule the commander-in-chief after the commencement of hostilities was ill-advised and inopportune, and was compounded by Hardinge's voluntary acceptance of a position subordinate to Gough.

After the Sikh defeat Hardinge decided on a form of Company sponsorship for the Punjab, leading to eventual independence, in preference to annexing the country or to engaging its dubious support by means of a subsidiary alliance. On the basis of the relative military weakness of the British after Sobraon, historians have argued that Hardinge, knowing annexation of the Punjab was then out of the question, was less than candid in claiming not to want to adopt such a course anyway. In support of this argument they have alluded to his expressed desire to plant the British flag on the Indus. They have similarly seized on other statements made by the governor-general that could be construed as favouring the annexation of the country.

It is true that before the war he threatened to wreak upon the Sikhs the full consequences of a Khalsa invasion of India and that, far from doing so, he imposed what by Asiatic standards were relatively mild terms. But it must be remembered that in his post-war correspondence - particularly after Peel's resignation - Hardinge had to justify his failure to annex the Punjab to men who would have welcomed such a course. The plea that he lacked the military means of effecting annexation may therefore have been intended simply to excuse his real policy. Equally it was necessary for him to weigh and discuss the merits and defects of annexation, as one of the alternatives open to him.

The tenor of Hardinge's correspondence after the war shows that he still wanted the Sikhs, if possible, to continue to guard the marches of India. He genuinely believed that the reassertion of the Durbar's authority within the Punjab was possible as well as desirable, and he did everything in his power to further this end. He did not, however, intend to involve the British in the sort of arrangement that had been made with the kings of Oudh, whereby Company support encouraged those rulers in their irresponsibility by virtually guaranteeing them against both insurrection and invasion.

Although Hardinge occasionally expressed doubts as to the capacity of the Durbar to reassert itself, towards the end of 1846 his experiment appeared on the verge of success, particularly when Sikh troops obediently marched to the support

of their enemy Gulab Singh. But at about this time Hardinge was informed that the members of the Durbar, with one exception, had expressed fears for the continuance of the government once the British garrison had left. This report, together with the revelation of Lal Singh's duplicity, proved to the governor-general that his attempt to bolster the Sikh government had not yet succeeded in its objective. The vazir's trial and the expiry of the treaty of Lahore presented him with the alternative of either withdrawing British troops and officials from the Punjab or of rewriting some of the provisions of the treaty of Lahore so as to increase the Company's involvement in the government of the country.

By threatening to withdraw his military support for the Sikh government, Hardinge was not so much attempting to force the Durbar to accept the second alternative as he was trying to make the sardars request publicly what most of them had stated in private they wanted. He insisted that any request by the Durbar for a continuation of active British support must be freely and voluntarily made by a majority of chiefs. Therefore by December 1846 Hardinge's initial preference for the withdrawal of the garrison had been replaced by a reluctant recognition that to prevent a recurrence of the anarchy of 1839-45 the British would have to exert a greater control over the Punjab, and for an extended period.

In the year following the treaty of Bhairawal Hardinge hovered near the frontier, keeping a watchful eye on events.

This period was marked by an almost unprecedented calm in the Punjab, and although the governor-general recognized the volatile nature of its inhabitants, he left India with the belief that the benefits of orderly administration and judicial fairness had greatly reduced the risk of further trouble on the frontier. He was not alone in so thinking. If he can be criticized for having been unduly sanguine it may be remarked that had he remained in India another year he might well have damped down the first spark of insurrection in Multan.

In 1847 Hardinge made a courageous and farsighted decision when in reducing the army's establishment he took the first step towards restoring India's finances and diminishing the Company's dependence on the use of force to maintain its supremacy on the sub-continent. Implicit in his correspondence was the belief that material benefits, such as roads, canals, railways, improved education and so on, were of as much value in sustaining Company rule as was the use of force. Yet in trying to make available the funds for such projects he did not commit the error of greatly reducing the strength and readiness of the army on the frontier.

Hardinge was a soldier entrusted with the administration of Britain's most valued colonial possession. This was not unusual; in the years following Waterloo military officers, and particularly veterans of the Peninsula war, governed most of Britain's colonies, not simply as soldiers but as men

possessing the varied talents necessary for such work.

That Hardinge went to India faced by the distinct possibility of having to make war on the Sikhs did not mean that he was sent out primarily as a military governor intended to maintain British rule there by force - the situation confronting him in 1844 was much less alarming than that faced in 1842 by Ellenborough, who had had little military experience.

Although Hardinge left for England before the task he had set himself vis à vis the Punjab was completed, the most immediate, and in the long run the last genuinely serious, threat to the external security of British India had been contained.

Unfortunately most historians have written of Sir Henry Hardinge's Indian administration as if this achievement, important as it proved, was its sole memorial.

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### Introduction

The Rare Book Department of the McLennan Library at McGill University has in its keeping a large collection (approximately 3675 pieces) of the papers and letters of Sir Henry Hardinge, loaned by the present Viscount Hardinge of Lahore. These are stored in ten large tin boxes and three wooden ones, and there are besides in the library seven rolls of microfilmed reproductions of material still in the possession of Helen, Lady Hardinge of Penshurst.

The Hardinge collection has been divided into two parts, largely through the work of Mrs Pat Howitt, of Montreal. The first part, consisting of printed documents, handwritten returns, memoranda, newspaper cuttings, and so on, is stored in seven of the tin boxes. This official and semi-official correspondence has been divided by Mrs Howitt into five sections; the Indian material is contained in section iii, subsection ii) which can be found in a folder marked "Mil Notes - Reliefs etc." The second part of the collection, Hardinge's private correspondence, occupies the remaining tin and wooden boxes and also predominates in the rolls of microfilm. The letters are arranged in rough chronological order. Those that are relevant to this thesis can be found in tin ii of the

the correspondence, mostly in a single buff envelope marked "Hardinge 1845 & 1846 & 1847." Of the rolls of microfilm the most valuable are contained in box i, Hardinge's private letters to Sir Robert Peel, box ii, his military papers, and box iv, which consists mostly of letters to Sir Walter James.

The military returns are useful indications of the extent of Hardinge's preparations, although in India before the advent of railways and the telegraph the giving of an order was not necessarily followed by its immediate execution. Particularly interesting are the orders detailing the movement of regiments from and to the frontier just prior to the war (these troop movements are given in full in the India Lists for 1845 and 1846). The memoranda written by Hardinge after the war, which ranged from questions of discipline to the troop dispositions on the frontier, are equally indicative of the governor-general's active interest in the army and in frontier security.

Far the most illuminating part of the Hardinge papers is the private correspondence. The governor-general's public despatches can be found in several published sources. These are, by the very nature of official papers, not particularly reliable, combining as they do varying degrees of hindsight, self-justification, and special pleading. Hardinge had to deal with two different governments at home, as well as with an often critical public, and his despatches were tempered by his awareness of the fact that frequently his views differed



from those held in England, sometimes markedly.

In his private correspondence, on the other hand, Hardinge was able to give freer rein to his impressions of the situation in the Punjab and to outline his plans to a more sympathetic audience. In his letters to Sir Robert Peel, a personal friend, the governor-general discussed his policy freely and openly, receiving in return the prime minister's strong support. This correspondence, at least as regards India, declined in volume after Peel's resignation in June 1846, suggesting that Hardinge was not above using the ties of friendship in support of his policy.

Another correspondent with whom Hardinge openly discussed the situation on the frontier was his stepson, Sir Walter James, member of parliament for Hull. In these letters the governor-general's desire that a Sikh government be maintained in the Punjab was frequently alluded to, as was also his intention of dealing sternly with that state if the sardars' folly brought on a war. His relations with Gough were referred to on several occasions by Hardinge in his correspondence with Sir Walter James.

Among the papers are some letters written by the governor-general's son and private secretary, Captain Charles Hardinge, who succeeded his father in the title. In view of Captain Hardinge's personal and official relationship with the governor-general these can be taken as accurate reflections of Sir Henry's opinions and complement the latter's

own correspondence.

Much of Hardinge's official correspondence can be found in the British Sessional Papers. More than eighty letters, returns, and despatches "Respecting the late hostilities on the north-western frontier of India" were published in 1846. In the following year a sizable collection of documents relating to the Indian army, the military budget, Shaikh Imam-ud-din's short-lived resistance to Gulab Singh, and the treaty of Bhairawal, was presented to parliament. These papers, together with those, frequently the same, that appeared in 1846 in "The War in India: Despatches of the Right Honourable Lt-Gen. Viscount Hardinge, etc.," are an informative and extensive source, but they suffer from the failings of official papers noted above. They carefully avoided controversy - for example neither Hardinge's despatch to the secret committee of 31 December 1845, nor Gough's letter to the governor-general of 22 December 1845 officially announcing the victory of Ferozeshah, mentioned the dispute over the junction with Littler - and they were sometimes necessarily mere outlines of the events and policies they described. The publication of so many documents relating to India reflected an upsurge of public and parliamentary interest in that country.

The lives of the empire-builders seem to have had a tremendous fascination to the Victorian mind, and a steady stream of biographies, memoirs, volumes of correspondence, and so on, was published, the books often portraying their subjects

in olympian terms. Few of the prominent Britons involved in the conquest of the Punjab lacked a written memorial of their achievements.

One of the most disappointing of the biographies is that of Hardinge himself, the only one written of the soldier-statesman, though a number of essays about him have appeared. Charles Hardinge used not only public documents, family papers, and letters, but also his own personal recollections in writing "Viscount Hardinge." The result is a very short book with only about eighty pages devoted to the Punjab. Probably its brevity owed more to editorial requirements than it did to the author's disinclination to write at greater length. Despite the availability to him of the private papers Charles Hardinge used mostly those despatches of his father that were then published, and his book is virtually a summary of Sir Henry Hardinge's official correspondence. The author did, however, reveal for the first time what transpired in the conference between Gough and his father before the commencement of the battle of Ferozeshah, and also effectively refuted Gleig's censure of the governor-general's preparations.

Lord Colchester's "The Indian Administration of Lord Ellenborough" contains Ellenborough's correspondence with Wellington and Queen Victoria. The letters in this book show more balance than those written in the late 'twenties, although Ellenborough's views still occasionally verged on the eccentric - as late as 1844 he had visions of a conquering march ending in

Egypt. His correspondence proved that he was painfully aware of the weaknesses of the Indian army; his attempts to strengthen it provide a useful background against which to set Hardinge's military preparations on the Sutlej.

A remarkable number of the soldiers who helped to defeat the Sikhs, and of the political officers who administered the Punjab, published their memoirs, among them George Lawrence, William Hodson, Sir Harry Smith, and Herbert Edwardes. The opinions of men who were called upon to implement Hardinge's policies cannot but be illuminating. Particularly valuable are the "Essays, Military and Political, written in India" by Sir Henry Lawrence. Lawrence was a staunch supporter of Hardinge, and his essay entitled "Lord Hardinge's Indian Administration" vigorously defended his superior's policies and actions.

Among the biographies of the leading figures of Hardinge's administration the most valuable are those of Henry and John Lawrence and George Broadfoot. Edwardes' and Merivale's "Life of Sir Henry Lawrence" was based on the large folio volumes of his official and private papers, kept by Lawrence, as well as his diaries. It makes very clear his opposition to annexation of the Punjab, and includes some important correspondence that passed between Hardinge and Lawrence on the administration of that country. R. Bosworth Smith's "Life of Lord Lawrence" is even more detailed than the biography of his brother and, in the tradition of Victorian

biographies, treats its subject in highly laudatory terms. It contains an interesting account of Hardinge's relations with John Lawrence - initially the latter's view of the governor-general was far from flattering, but it did not long remain so.

The importance of the frontier agency in the eighteen months prior to the war makes Major W. Broadfoot's biography of his brother, "The Career of Major George Broadfoot," particularly relevant to this study. The book was based on Ellenborough's and Hardinge's papers as well as on the correspondence of leading officials such as Sir Frederick Currie and H. M. Elliot. It demonstrates not only Broadfoot's ability and industry, but also his lack of understanding of the Sikhs and his excitability, which latter trait occasionally earned Hardinge's reproof. The letters between Broadfoot and the government reveal the stratagems used to reinforce the frontier without alarming the Sikhs.

J. D. Cunningham's "A History of the Sikhs," which first appeared in 1849, is the most authoritative of the accounts written by contemporaries of the rise and fall of the Sikh state. During the first Sikh war Cunningham acted as a political agent with the army in the field, but in the latter part of 1846 Hardinge transferred him to the Bhopal agency because he thought him "a perfect Sikh and to a degree which disqualifies him for employment on this frontier." The publication of his history caused a furore because in it he asserted

that Lal Singh and Tej Singh had been bought by the British. In 1850 Cunningham was removed from the political service on the grounds that in his book he had used confidential information. Although both Hardinge and Henry Lawrence rejected Cunningham's charge, his disgrace lent credibility to it.

Of the secondary sources the best are those written in recent years by Indian historians. The most valuable of these books are two by B. J. Hasrat. In the first, "Anglo-Sikh Relations, 1799-1849," Hasrat used manuscript sources in the Commonwealth Records Office, the Public Records Office, and the British Museum, including the private papers of Ellenborough (among which is his correspondence with Hardinge) and Hobhouse. This is a controversial book that frequently challenges the traditional account of the declining years of the Sikh state. "The Punjab Papers" includes selections from the private papers of Auckland, Ellenborough, Hardinge and Dalhousie that deal with Punjab between 1836 and 1849. Among those of Hardinge are parts of his correspondence with Lady Hardinge, Hobhouse, and Ellenborough. The letters that passed between the governor-general and the new president of the board of control regarding the treaty of Bhairowal are particularly illuminating.

Another valuable, though distinctly partial, source is Jagmohan Mahajan's "Circumstances Leading to the Annexation of the Punjab, 1846-1849." The writer had access to the private papers of Sir Frederick Currie. He tended to take

quotations out of their context, making their authors appear unashamedly expansionist (compare his interpretation, p. 22, of a letter from Ellenborough to the Queen of 20 October 1843 with the version in Colchester, p. 98). Similarly Mahajan took Hardinge's comment that he would have liked to plant the British flag on the Indus as an expression of his forward views, and added that the governor-general was prevented from annexing the Punjab in March 1846 only by military weakness. In his view the whole purpose of the treaty of Lahore was to weaken the Sikhs to the point where annexation could safely be attempted.

One of the most respected of modern historians of the Punjab is Khushwant Singh. However, in the extensive bibliography to the second volume of his authoritative "History of the Sikhs" he lists those of the Hardinge papers which are in the keeping of McGill University without having given any indication that he actually used them. In this book he implied that in March 1846 the Indian government pressed the acceptance of a British garrison in Lahore on the Sikhs, and that nine months later Hardinge forced the Durbar to request the continued occupation by Littler of the capital.

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"At Them with the Bayonet!" is a stirring account of the first Sikh war, but it contains a number of inaccuracies and it follows its sources sometimes too faithfully. The regimental histories of the units that fought in the war are useful for the light they throw on the state of preparedness of the European troops; they also supply little-known details concerning the concentration of the army on the frontier.



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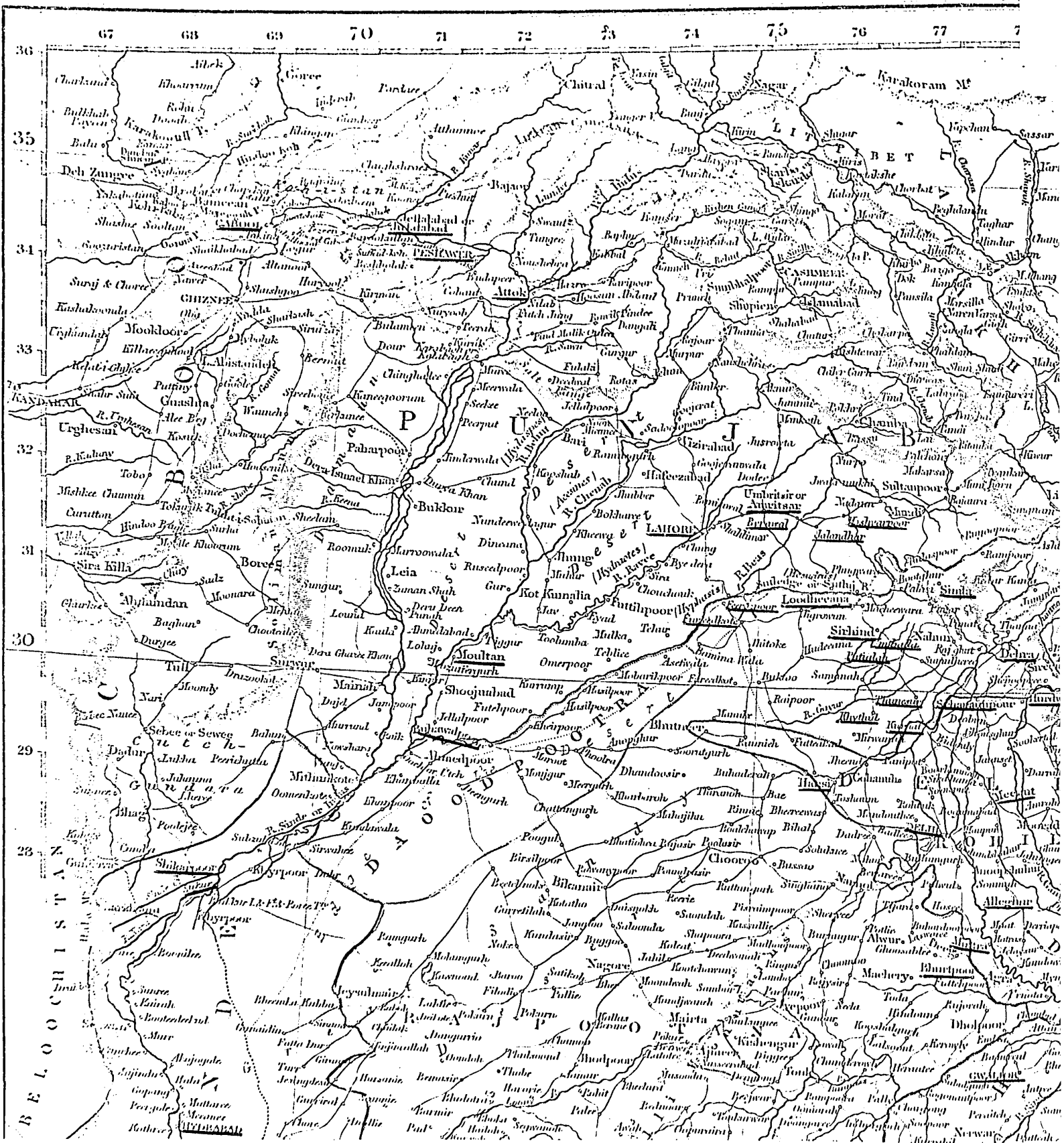
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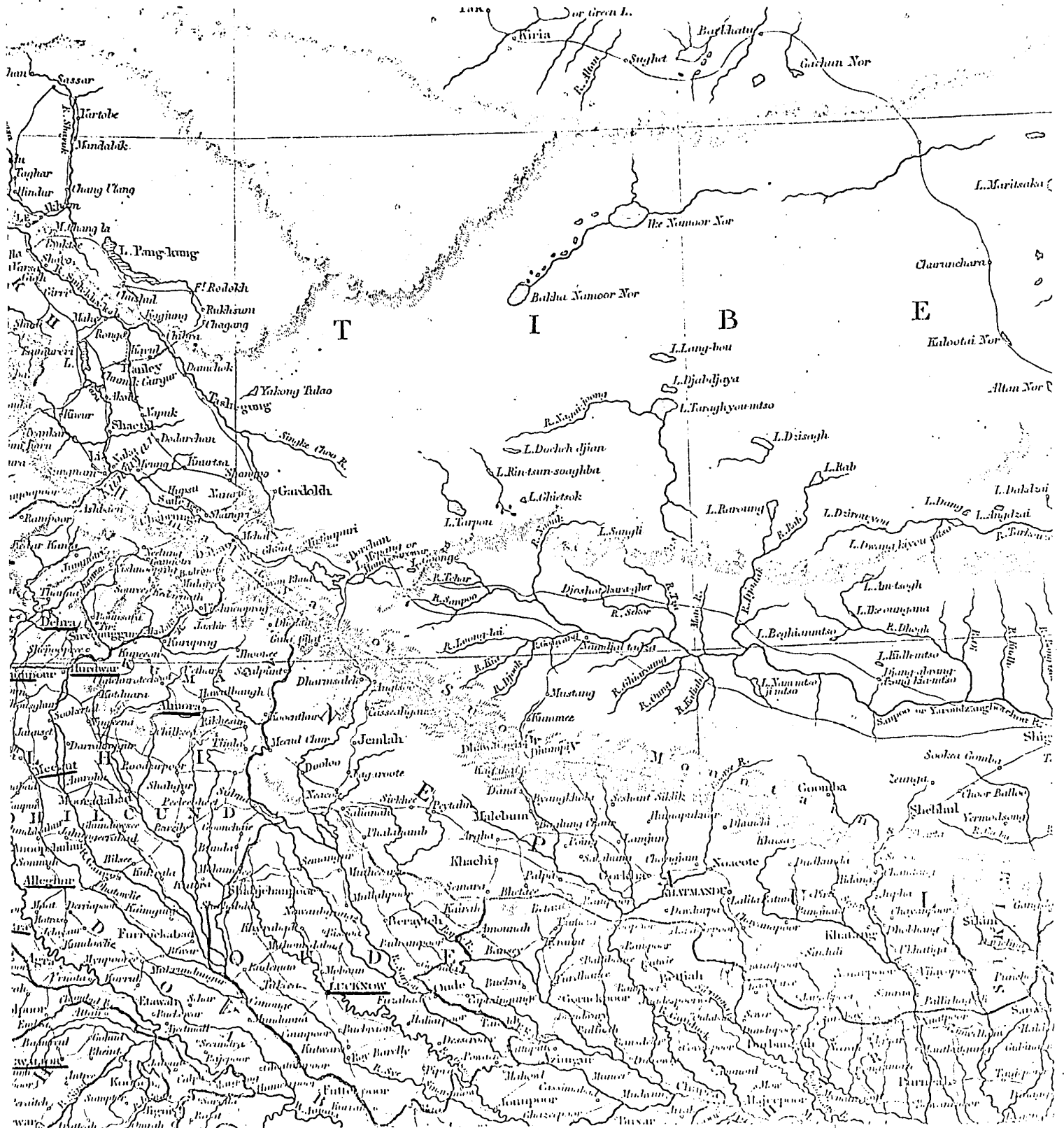
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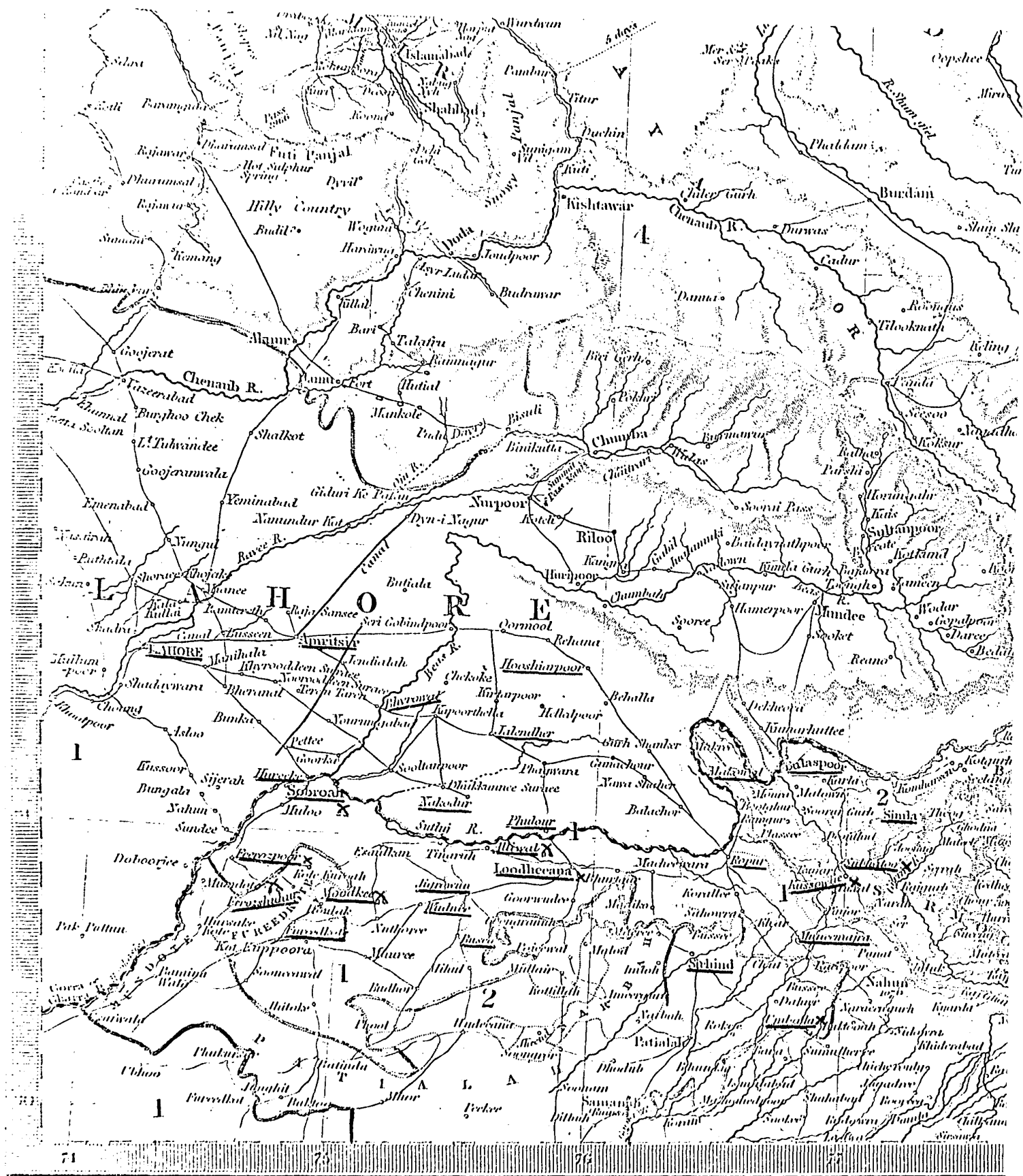




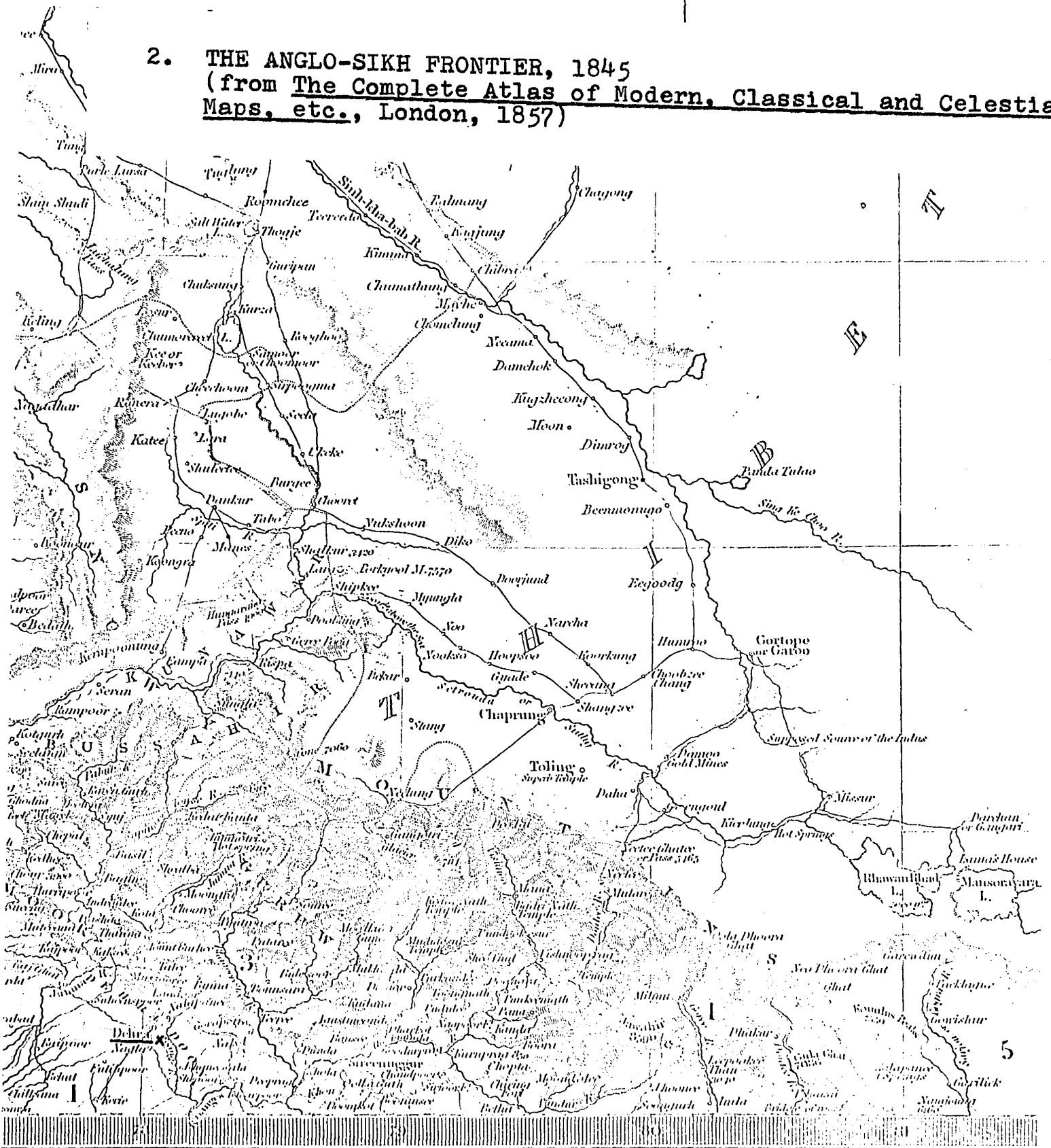
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